Venus™

For People of African Descent in the Life
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STEP INTO THE COMFORT ZONE

By Quohnos Mitchell

PLUS!

Celebrity Close-Ups
Tyra Banks
Eric Benet
Sheryl Lee Ralph
and
Debra Cox

Cruzan in St. Croix

by Rosiland Lloyd

Mary & Lou

fiction by Shirlene Holmes

0 74470 90948 4 01>
Vol. 5 No. 1 $2.95 US

If you're HIV+,

Being HIV+ isn't easy.

It's a daily challenge that can take all you've got. It helps to have an advantage – to lighten your load and keep you going. Federal healthcare guidelines now call for including a potent protease inhibitor as part of combination treatments to fight HIV. Consider these reasons to make the protease inhibitor CRIXIVAN the foundation of your treatment regimen.

CRIXIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIXIVAN can help reduce the chance of illnesses and death associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Some patients may not experience these effects. CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS.

New NIH research showed people taking CRIXIVAN in triple therapy lived longer and experienced fewer opportunistic infections.

Recent year-long research conducted by the National Institutes of Health (Protocol ACTG 320) studied over 1,000 patients and confirmed results from another study.

The group of patients receiving CRIXIVAN along with 3TC and AZT achieved a reduction in deaths and AIDS-defining illnesses over those taking 3TC and AZT alone. This reduction was significant enough for the NIH to recommend the study be stopped, so that all participants could benefit from the findings. Because the study was ended early, there was insufficient data to determine the statistical impact of CRIXIVAN on survival.

CRIXIVAN in triple therapy continues to hold serum viral load down below the limit of detection at the one year mark.

In a separate, ongoing landmark study, over 90% of the 31 patients receiving CRIXIVAN, AZT, and 3TC reduced their HIV serum viral load below the limit of detection after 24 weeks (as measured by available tests; the virus may still be present in other organ systems).

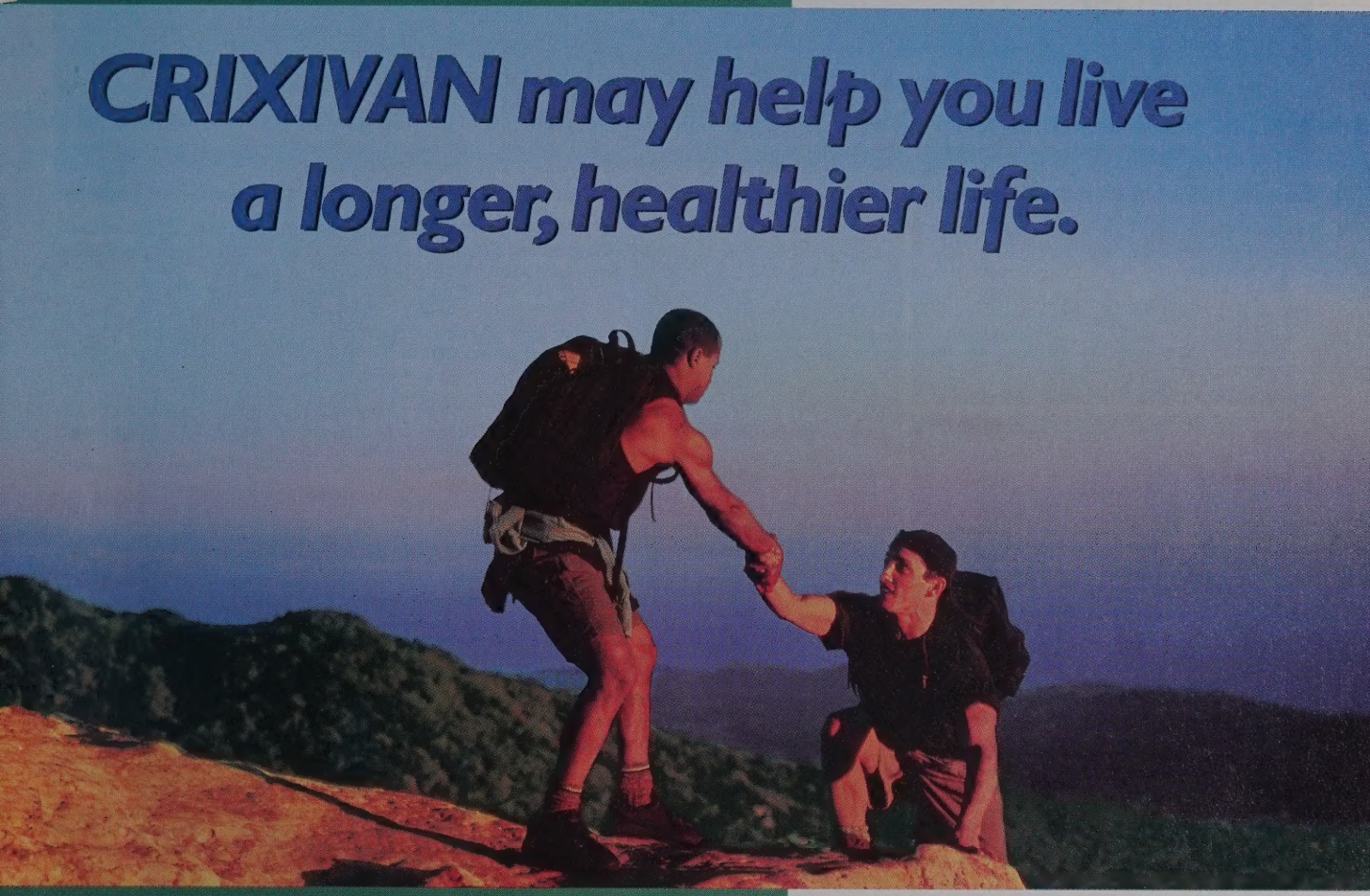
Importantly, the limited number of patients who chose to stay with the study for longer periods of time maintained these results through the one year mark.

CRIXIVAN is generally well tolerated.

CRIXIVAN can be taken with a light meal or on an empty stomach. There are side effects associated with protease inhibitors in general and CRIXIVAN in particular. Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN may develop kidney stones. For some, this can lead to more severe kidney problems including kidney failure. Drinking at least 6 glasses of water each day may help reduce the chance of forming a kidney stone. Other side effects reported include rapid breakdown of red blood cells and liver problems. There are some common medications and AIDS-related medications you should not take with CRIXIVAN. Discuss all medications you are taking or plan to take with your doctor.

As with other protease inhibitors, increased bleeding in some patients with hemophilia and increased blood sugar levels or diabetes have been reported. Please read the following page for detailed information on side effects and dosing.

CRIXIVAN may help you live a longer, healthier life.



CRIXIVAN is the number one choice of doctors.*

CRIXIVAN is prescribed for more patients than any other protease inhibitor. With this commitment to CRIXIVAN comes a commitment to product improvements and further research in the battle against HIV. CRIXIVAN is being studied in a broad range of patients and in many different combinations. Ask your doctor for the latest news and developments.

* IMS America; 3/96 - 7/98.

Focus on the rest of your life.

Learn all you can about HIV therapy. Talk with your doctor. Stay informed and stay the course. With viral load below the limit of detection and an increase in CD4 T-cells, it's easier to look forward to the future with confidence.

Please read the following page for more detailed information about CRIXIVAN.

Remember to ask your doctor about CRIXIVAN.

CRIXIVAN®
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules

Going the distance.

MERCK

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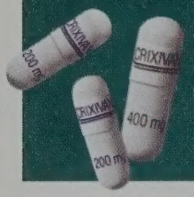


CRIXIVAN®
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules

Patient Information about CRIXIVAN* (KRIK-sih-van)
for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: indinavir (in-DIH-nuh-veer) sulfate

Please read this information before you start taking CRIXIVAN. Also, you should read the information included with CRIXIVAN each time you receive your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss CRIXIVAN when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups. You should remain under a doctor's care when using CRIXIVAN and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is CRIXIVAN?

CRIXIVAN is an oral capsule used for the treatment of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). CRIXIVAN is a type of HIV drug called a protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor.

How does CRIXIVAN work?

CRIXIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIXIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. CRIXIVAN may not have these effects in all patients.

CRIXIVAN is usually prescribed with other anti-HIV drugs such as ZDV (also called AZT), 3TC, ddI, ddC, or d4T. CRIXIVAN works differently from these other anti-HIV drugs. Talk with your doctor about how you should take CRIXIVAN.

CRIXIVAN has been studied in adults. The safety and effectiveness of CRIXIVAN in children and adolescents have not been established.

How should I take CRIXIVAN?

There are six important things you must do to help you benefit from CRIXIVAN:

1. **Take CRIXIVAN capsules every day as prescribed by your doctor.** Continue taking CRIXIVAN unless your doctor tells you to stop. Take the exact amount of CRIXIVAN that your doctor tells you to take, right from the very start. To help make sure you will benefit from CRIXIVAN, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays." If you don't take CRIXIVAN as prescribed, the activity of CRIXIVAN may be reduced (due to resistance).
2. **Take CRIXIVAN capsules every 8 hours around the clock, *every day*.** It may be easier to remember to take CRIXIVAN if you take it at the same time every day. If you have questions about when to take CRIXIVAN, your doctor or health care provider can help you decide what schedule works for you.
3. **If you miss a dose by more than 2 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time.** However, if you miss a dose by less than 2 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of CRIXIVAN at any one time.
4. **Take CRIXIVAN with water.** You can also take CRIXIVAN with other beverages such as skim or non-fat milk, juice, coffee, or tea.
5. **Ideally, take each dose of CRIXIVAN without food but with water at least one hour before or two hours after a meal.** Or you can take CRIXIVAN with a light meal. Examples of light meals include:
   - dry toast with jelly, juice, and coffee (with skim or non-fat milk and sugar if you want)
   - corn flakes with skim or non-fat milk and sugar

   Do not take CRIXIVAN at the same time as any meals that are high in calories, fat, and protein (for example — a bacon and egg breakfast). When taken at the same time as CRIXIVAN, these foods can interfere with CRIXIVAN being absorbed into your bloodstream and may lessen its effect.
6. **It is critical that you drink at least six 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) throughout the day, every day. CRIXIVAN can cause kidney stones.** Having enough fluids in your body should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (middle to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Does CRIXIVAN cure HIV or AIDS?

CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS. People taking CRIXIVAN may still develop infections or other conditions associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important for you to remain under the care of a doctor. Although CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS, CRIXIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses, including death, associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN may not have these effects in all patients.

Does CRIXIVAN reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

CRIXIVAN has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take CRIXIVAN?

Do not take CRIXIVAN if you have had a serious allergic reaction to CRIXIVAN or any of its components.

What other medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my doctor?

Talk to your doctor if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while you are taking CRIXIVAN. We do not yet know how CRIXIVAN affects pregnant women or their developing babies.
- You are breast-feeding. You should stop breast-feeding if you are taking CRIXIVAN.

Also talk to your doctor if you have:

- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease caused by cirrhosis.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Diabetes
- Hemophilia

Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking or plan to take, including non-prescription medicines.

Can CRIXIVAN be taken with other medications?**

Drugs you should not take with CRIXIVAN:

SELDANE® (terfenadine)
VERSED® (midazolam)
PROPULSID® (cisapride)
HISMANAL® (astemizole)
HALCION® (triazolam)
Ergot medications (e.g., Wigraine® and Cafergot®)

Taking CRIXIVAN with the above medications could result in serious or life-threatening problems (such as irregular heartbeat or excessive sleepiness).

In addition, you should not take CRIXIVAN with rifampin, known as RIFADIN®, RIFAMATE®, RIFATER®, or RIMACTANE®.

Drugs you can take with CRIXIVAN include:

RETROVIR® (zidovudine, ZDV also called AZT)
TAGAMET® (cimetidine)
DIFLUCAN® (fluconazole)
EPIVIR™ (lamivudine, 3TC)
BACTRIM®/SEPTRA® (trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole)
BIAXIN® (clarithromycin)
isoniazid (INH)
ORTHO-NOVUM 1/35® (oral contraceptive)
ZERIT® (stavudine, d4T)

VIDEX® (didanosine, ddI) — If you take CRIXIVAN with VIDEX®, take them at least one hour apart.

MYCOBUTIN® (rifabutin) — If you take CRIXIVAN with MYCOBUTIN®, your doctor may adjust both the dose of MYCOBUTIN and the dose of CRIXVAN.

NIZORAL® (ketoconazole) — If you take CRIXIVAN with NIZORAL®, your doctor may adjust the dose of CRIXIVAN.

Talk to your doctor about any medications you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of CRIXIVAN?

Like all prescription drugs, CRIXIVAN can cause side effects. The following is **not** a complete list of side effects reported with CRIXIVAN when taken either alone or with other anti-HIV drugs. Do not rely on this page alone for information about side effects. Your doctor can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN developed kidney stones. In some of these patients this led to more severe kidney problems, including kidney failure or inflammation of the kidneys. Drinking at least six 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) each day should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (middle to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN have had rapid breakdown of red blood cells (hemolytic anemia) which in some cases was severe or resulted in death.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN have had liver problems including liver failure and death. Some patients had other illnesses or were taking other drugs. It is uncertain if CRIXIVAN caused these liver problems.

Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) have occurred in patients taking protease inhibitors. In some of these patients, this led to ketoacidosis, a serious condition caused by poorly controlled blood sugar. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients required adjustments to their diabetes medication. Others needed new diabetes medication.

In some patients with hemophilia, increased bleeding has been reported.

Clinical Studies

Increases in bilirubin (one laboratory test of liver function) have been reported in approximately 10% of patients. Usually, this finding has not been associated with liver problems. However, on rare occasions, a person may develop yellowing of the skin and/or eyes.

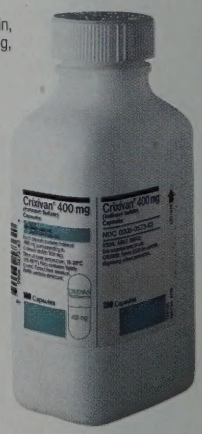
Side effects occurring in 2% or more of patients included: abdominal pain, fatigue or weakness, flank pain, feeling unwell, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, acid regurgitation, loss of appetite, dry mouth, back pain, headache, trouble sleeping, dizziness, taste changes, rash, upper respiratory infection, dry skin, and sore throat.

Swollen kidneys due to blocked urine flow occurred rarely.

Marketing Experience

Other side effects reported since CRIXIVAN has been marketed include: abdominal swelling; inflammation of the kidneys; increased fat appearing in areas such as the neck, abdomen, and back; change in skin color; severe skin reactions; hair loss; crystals in the urine; and allergic reactions.

Tell your doctor promptly about these or any other unusual symptoms. If the condition persists or worsens, seek medical attention.



How should I store CRIXIVAN capsules?

- Keep CRIXIVAN capsules in the bottle they came in and at room temperature (59°F-86°F).
- Keep CRIXIVAN capsules dry by leaving the small desiccant "pillow" in the bottle. Keep the bottle closed.

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep CRIXIVAN and all medicines out of the reach of children. If you suspect that more than the prescribed dose of this medicine has been taken, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

This provides a summary of information about CRIXIVAN. If you have any questions or concerns about either CRIXIVAN or HIV, talk to your doctor.

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Capsules

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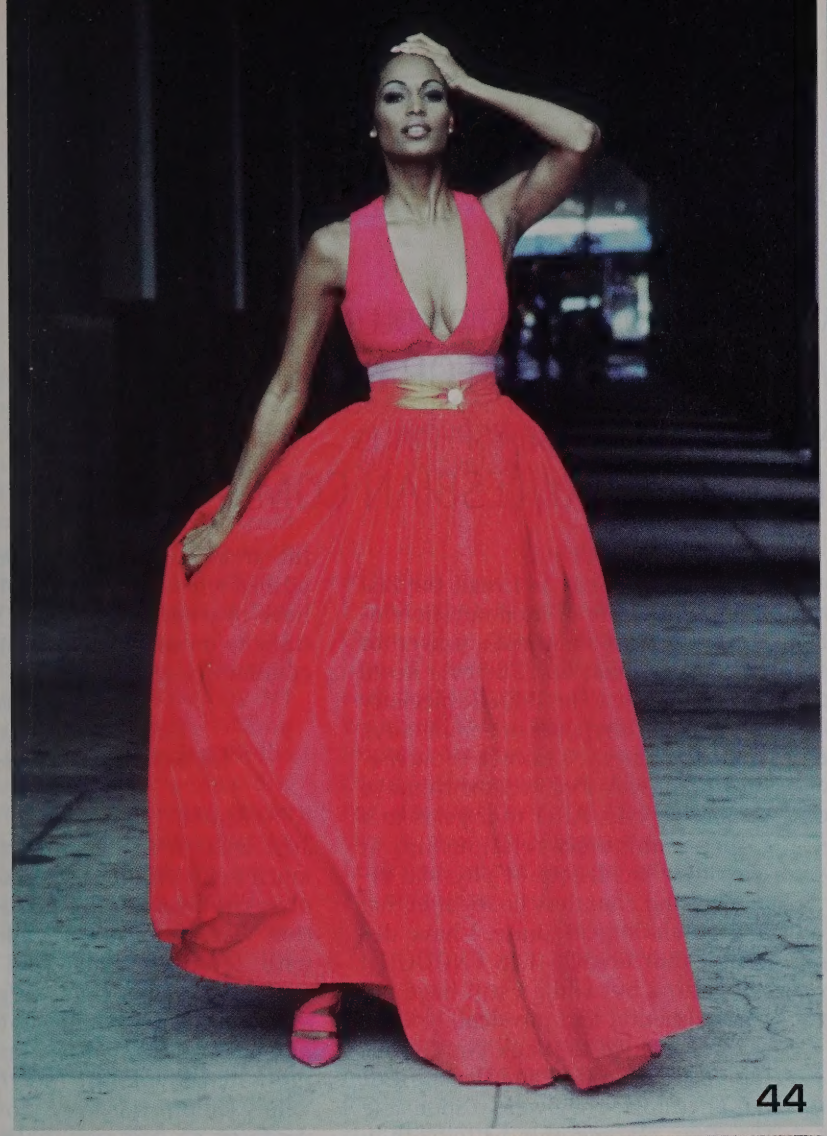
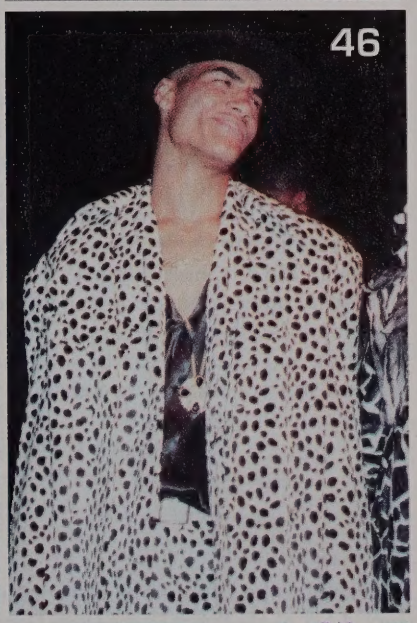
contents





FEATURES 12 The Comfort Zone. Visit the new Harlem speakeasy 50 **A Real Read:** A Chicago theater company makes no apologies **DEPARTMENTS** 16 **Spirit** "Mary and Lou": visit the town of Cotsville with an adoring fictional story by an Atlanta playwright! 44 **Style Wise** On the catwalk with New York designer Barron Wise 46 Lloyd Boston's Men of Color come alive 19 **Milestone** featuring Gladys Bentley 36 **Travel** Cruzan in St. Croix 42 **Technology** The Y2K Problem and you **IN EVERY ISSUE** 6 **letters** 24 **people** 25 **congrats** 26 **sex talk, ask marian** 34 **To the point** Terms of Endearment. Should we embrace terms used to degrade us? by Don Charles 52 **Books** Respecting the Soul, Like Breathing, Last Rights, As I Am 53 **Music** New CDs by Shae Jones, Jeff Majors 58 **SistahSpeak** Out at the Beauty Shop **ON THE COVER** Christopher of The Comfort Zone, photography by Tina Paul

"I FROZE IN MY SEAT AS I READ THE ISSUE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. GOD ANSWERED A PRAYER FOR ME. UP UNTIL THAT DAY, I'D NEVER HEARD ANYONE DISCUSS THE ISSUE, ESPECIALLY IN THE BLACK GAY/LESBIAN COMMUNITY."

GREAT EXPERIENCE

I have been reading your magazine for the past year and it has really been a great experience. Your articles are most informative and I love the "Out and About" section. Venus is like a black "In the Life" Vanity Fair (smile).

I would like to see features on more people in the arts, like George C. Wolfe and many others who are gay and have a high profile. They are great role models of the fact that you can be successful and still remain true to yourself.

Keep up the good work!

James K. Mathis
Conservatory of Black Theater
New York City

NO FLUFF

I picked up the fifth anniversary issue [Vol. 4 No. 4] at Church Of the Open Door and wanted to congratulate you and your contributors for a fine publication.

It's great to see a national, glossy, well-designed magazine that's not full of fluff pieces. I especially appreciated Ulester Douglas' article on domestic violence. It really spotlighted the need for the creation of agencies and support networks within our communities in order to address the unique experiences of brothas and sistas in the life. Don Charles in "Brothatalk" took the words right out of my mouth. While the criticism of Bill Clinton by hypocritical Republicans turns my stomach, it is difficult for me to have sympathy for a man who has abandoned Black and lesbigaytrans Americans when it became politically expedient to do so.

Thank you very much for the Healthy Living Pocket Guide. The info and resources are great. Continued blessings.

Otis Richardson
Chicago, IL

A PRAYER ANSWERED

I froze in my seat as I read the last issue [Vol.4, No. 4] on domestic violence. God had answered a prayer for me. Up until that day, I'd never heard anyone discuss the issue (especially in the Black Gay/Lesbian community). You see, domestic violence is the major reason why I've decided to move to another city. After four years in a rather ambiguous relationship, at least four incidences of physical violence, and countless bouts of verbal and psychological abuse, I have declared that ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!! I'm getting out while I still have my health (mental and physical).

I just wanted to thank you for being obedient to God and the spirit of our ancestors. They were responsible for your placing this article; they knew that I needed further confirmation. I can go on, now--empowered and encouraged.

Anonymous

CAUGHT MY EYE

What really caught my eye was your article on BLACK GAYS IN CORPORATE AMERICA, [Vol.4, No.3,1998]. This topic should be discussed throughout EVERY company in America, as there are GAYS and LESBIANS in every field, trade, and industry.

I will spread the GOSPEL of Venus to others. Keep up the GREAT WORK!!

Michael Wilson
Raleigh, NC

SUCCESS STORIES

I really enjoyed the Corporate issue of Venus. One article that especially touched me was "A Black Dyke, Empowered"[Vol.4 No.3, 1998]. Thank you for including "success stories" of lesbian and gay people at work, and the great things that can be accomplished when we live in truth and believe in what we're doing. You continue to do such quality work for the community–thank you.

Gina Bowers
Communications Coordinator
Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center

A PLEASURE!

Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your Special 5th Anniversary issue. The rejuvenation section was a pleasure; the interview with Jewelle Gomez was inspirational; the James Baldwin page was a blast of clarity; Don Charles' essay on Bill Clinton was timely and thought provoking; the tribute to Venus Landin was very moving and the focus on domestic violence a reminder of the work that is left to be done. The magazine is a pleasure to look at and even more of a pleasure to read. Don't stop!

Pearl Cleage
Author, Playwright
Atlanta, GA

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

I walked past the bookstore and remembered I wanted to check out that gay magazine I'd saw once before a long time ago named Venus. I convinced my partner to come inside with me for just a minute while I checked it out.

As I walked over to it I couldn't shake the feeling that I knew that womyn on the cover. I kept telling myself it was stress and a overactive imagination.

How in the world would I out here in Seattle know the womyn on the cover of a magazine based in

New York. Right? But I kept looking anyway. I finally picked it up and stared at it and the name on the cover. It took a minute for the shock to settle but I knew that was Liki. [Venus Landin's childhood nick name] My neighbor. She lived across the street from me when we were both in high school in a little town in Michigan. I remembered that she had had a son and then my head started to swim as I remembered hearing she had been killed by her lover. I just stood there holding the magazine remembering all the good times we'd had together. She turned me on to Saturday Night Live and the Rocky Horror Picture Show. We used to sit on her porch in the summer and talk about music and hang out with her honey. All I kept remembering is how much I wish she was here now ...how I never got a chance to hang out with her when I was fully grown and tell her about all the things I'd learned about myself and the world and how she woulda told me something funny, and poignant all at the same time if I'd had that chance. I really miss her. After I left and went to college we lost touch; bumped into each other occasionally but not nearly enough looking back. Life can be so short and you don't even think about it until somebody you know is gone.

I didn't think it was strange that a magazine has been named in her memory.

She was rare and special. If one got a chance to know her you surely couldn't forget her. I wondered out of all the homophobic rants I heard back home about her life and death if anyone there knew or cared that she had a magazine named after her. And if it mattered enough for them to drop their fear and see her as she lived-vibrant, unafraid to make some tough choices and keep on stepping. Then I thought well I have a chance to remember her that way and I will. Thanks for the memories and putting one of my old friends on the cover and keeping her memory alive through your magazine.

Meri Tahset
Seattle, WA

APPLAUSE

I first want to say how much I thoroughly enjoy your publication. It's been a while since I have seen a decent magazine that deals with our issues as a same gender loving community and with pertinent information that is useful for now or later. Applause is surely due for stepping out on faith and creating such a wonderful magazine.

Carlos V. Edwards
Cincinnati, OH

WAKE UP CALL

Having recently received my first issue, I have to say that I was very pleased with it! I applaud Ulester Douglass for his article on domestic violence in our community. It saddens me, that a beautiful sister, was killed, due to this plight.

Someone close to me, was in an abusive relationship for ten years.

She refuses to "label" it so, despite the fact that her ex-lover has menaced her with a machete, on more than one occasion. Her rationale, which is irrational, is that she is/was physically bigger and knew that "I could take her if need be." My friend is a passive butch.

Senseless, yes! What is even more senseless is that we, as a community have not created a powerful support system, where help can be readily accessible. This is clearly reflected in Cleo Manago's article about the black community caring about ourselves.

Continue to be what you are: Venus-a much needed voice, a wake up call, a resource for us!

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Venus™

FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN THE LIFE

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Venus Magazine is published
4 times a year by
Cothran Publications, Inc.
P.O. Box 150
Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706
914-376-6161
Fax 914-376-1666
Email:editor@venusmagazine.com
www.venusmagazine.com

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He opened your eyes
with *Invisible Life*...
He rocked your world
with *Just As I Am*...

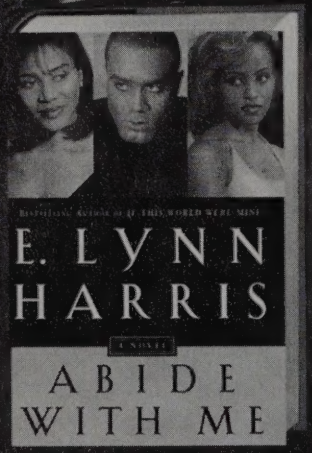
Now, *New York Times*
bestselling author

E. Lynn Harris

will ignite your soul
with his new novel

Abide with Me

Matthew Jordan Smith



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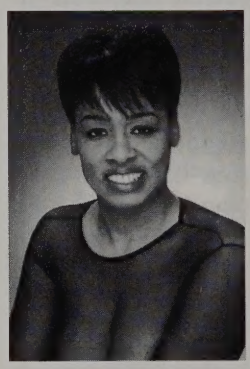
contributors

Shirlene Holmes, a Queens, NY native, is a nationally known playwright educator, and scholar, who is based in Atlanta, where she is an Associate Professor at Georgia State University. Her plays have been produced locally, nationally and internationally. Dr. Holmes is the 1997 recipient of the Nancy Dean Distinguished Playwriting Award, has plays and articles published in anthologies and magazines.



Kimberly "Q" Purnell, or "Q" as she is so affectionately called is a mover and shaker. Kimberly is an actress, writer, producer, singer, dancer, who recently won the 1998 Audelco Award for "Best Supporting Actress" and is currently working at producing her one-woman show, "The "Q" stands for Queer!" She is constantly experimenting and taking on challenging roles and responsibilities in her life and looks to continue to grow and learn. Motto: Always remember your past, because it is the key to your future!

Quohnos Mitchell is a freelance writer and publicist living in New York City. In addition to writing for Venus, his work has appeared in several national magazines including Vibe and Entertainment Weekly. His public relations firm currently handles publicity for BadBoy Entertainment. In this issue Quohnos takes us inside the 'Comfort Zone', a Harlem 'speak-easy' frequented by black gay men who have grown tired of the bars.

Regina M. Knotts, a native of Newark, Delaware, currently manages an interviewing site for a marketing research firm. She is an aspiring sociologist who is preparing for a return to graduate school. Her poignant essay explores the effects of homophobia in sacred black communal environments like The Beauty Shop.

Lessons in Living

My favorite Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Mason, from my old neighborhood recently visited our home with her husband, a deacon at the church where I grew up. She was accompanied by my dearest Mother Jackson and Miss Fannie both of at least 80 years. Aunt Liz, my grandmothers best friend, was accompanied by her two sons and was joined by a third son who lives here in New York. My life partner, Marian and I had invited them all to help us celebrate the 80th birthday of Mrs. Ollie Hall, my grandmother.

Naturally, we were thrilled when they accepted our invitation to make the trip from Trenton to New York City, about a 2 hour drive. Marian and I were a bit nervous but not really. We were more worried about the variety of our menu than anything else. We hadn't given one thought to tucking away the happy snap shot of us standing cheek to cheek which sits atop our piano or the dozens of books on the library shelves which include a display of gay literature or the copies of *Venus*, among other magazines, in the family room.

We wanted to present ourselves as we live everyday, the three of us, as a family.

Mrs. Mason, an articulate, warm and intelligent woman, has always been quite a progressive thinker. And although I had come out to her a couple of years ago, it was hard to predict how the afternoon would unfold. We broke the ice by passing around my mother's old photo albums which immediately jump-started memories and laughter. We later moved to the dinner table where Marian had prepared the 'Last' supper. As we held hands, I thought about asking Deacon Mason to offer the family prayer, but I decided to pray myself. Something in me needed to let them know that I am still in touch with heaven and most importantly, that heaven is still in touch with me!

By the end of the evening everyone was linked arm and arm, swaying to the music of Ella Fitzgerald as my nephew, Nathaniel, snapped birthday pictures and my grandmother, dance with her great grandson, Eric. What a wonderful afternoon it turned out to be. We had all experienced a new life lesson. For us, the lesson was that our people are ready to accept us, without sermons and lectures, just as we are, when we present ourselves with pride and dignity.

The lesson for them is that love makes a house a home, no matter who is living there.

The most dynamic part of this story is that this visit helped to move one Black church a little closer to accepting all it's family members and a little farther from it's history of homophobia. I'm told that Mrs. Mason, Deacon Mason and Mother Jackson all testified the following Sunday, one after the other, about what a fabulous time they had, and how "their home is filled with so much love, you know that God lives there."

Charlene Cothran,
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

Only Your Hairdresser Knows How

Poetic Healing

An anthology of poetry is being compiled of Lesbians of Color mainly about abuse, breast cancer, chemical dependency, lesbian phobia, racism, sexism and other life challenges that have healed you, others or promotes healing. Send a miximum of 3 original and unpublished poems to:

Chinwe Odeluga
1941 Gaston Place DR, #328
Autsin, TX 78723
or email: **codebuga66@hotmail.com**

Beauty and Health Work Together

Clairol, Inc., through its support of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is helping reduce breast cancer mortality rates among African-American women by working with the University of California at San Diego cancer Center (UCSD) to promote and support the Black Beauticians Health Promotion Program. This program recruits and trains beauticians to educate their clients on the importance of breast cancer screening and other healthy lifestyle choices.

Although the incidence of breast cancer is higher among Caucasian women than African-American women, the mortality rate among African American women is higher. Black beauticians were selected as focal point in reaching this high-risk population because discussions of a personal nature are commonplace inthe beauty salon. Within this community in particular, the relationship between client and stylist is strong and it is based on implicit trust and faith. Women spend a considerable amount of time at the beauty salon throughout the year and once a relationship is established, patrons rarely change beauticians.

The Black Beauticians Health Promotion Program was based on a pilot study conducted by the UCSD Cancer Center to determine whether beauticians can serve as health educators for information of special concern to their clients and whether they are able to motivate their clients to adopt health-promoting behaviors. The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation funded the expansion of this pilot program to a statistically significant study to be conducted over three years, (1997-2000). The study will provide answers about a new model of providing health information to women that can be replicated nationally.

Currently, 20 hair salons are participating in the program.

To maximize the beautician's power of persuasion and influence, the program relies upon the proven art of ancestral storytelling. Ms. Alyce Smith Cooper, a renowned storyteller, works with the beauticians to refine their art of storytelling and witnessing, both of which are recognized as an effective means of conveying social mores and values within the African-American community.

"It was conceivable that by conveying key information through the familiar methods of storytelling and witnessing, black women could become motivated to follow annual breast-cancer screening guidelines," said Georgia Robins Sadler, Ph.D., Associate Director for Outreach at UCSD Cancer Center.

ALTHOUGH THE INCIDENCE OF BREAST CANCER IS HIGHER AMONG CAUCASIAN WOMEN THAN AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN, THE MORTALITY RATE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IS HIGHER. BLACK BEAUTICIANS WERE SELECTED AS FOCAL POINT IN REACHING THIS HIGH-RISK POPULATION BECAUSE DISCUSSIONS OF A PERSONAL NATURE ARE COMMONPLACE IN THE BEAUTY SALON.

Gay Clients have Overwhelmingly Positive Experiences in Psychotherapy

Despite decades of tension between gays and lesbians and the mental health establishment, gay clients overwhelmingly report positive experiences in psychotherapy, according to a report by New York University Professors Mary Ann Jones and Martha A. Gabriel. The professors also found that gay and lesbian clients did not believe it was necessary to have psychotherapists who were gay themselves to have these positive experiences.

According to the study, lesbians and gay men begin treatment at an earlier age than their heterosexual counterparts, have longer periods of treatment, and seem to have a more favorable view of seeking professional help. Their reasons for entering therapy, however, are the same as heterosexual: dissatisfaction with relationships, their work life, their general sense of happiness and well-being.

Of the 600 individuals surveyed who identified as gay or lesbian, 2% were black, reports the NYC publicity office. According to Geanie Bond, a licensed marriage and family therapist with a busy practice of mostly African American gay and lesbian identified clients, black gays and lesbians are "more enthusiastic about therapy and tend to achieve better results and stay in therapy longer" than their black heterosexual counterparts. She also states that the pervasiveness of therapy as taboo in African American culture prevents most blacks from seeking therapy before the crisis stage. She says, "Black gays and lesbians tend to seek help a little before crisis because of compounded issues such as depression brought on by homophobia in black communities."

A red light bulb shines above the door that is the entrance to a luxurious and private meeting place tucked deep in heart of what we now call "Harlem World". Simply tagged Comfort Zone this well-appointed one hundred year old Brownstone is apart of a modern Harlem Renaissance where we have moved far beyond the self conscious creative awakening following the darkness of slavery, beyond the need to proclaim our existence by screaming: "If there' s cure for this I don't want it!!" and onto the next level of our reawakening were we proactively become accountable for our lives, our spirits, and our surroundings creating comfortable supportive safe environments for ourselves.

"I had no place that I wanted to go and just simply socialize," says president Byron Barnes. "I would call my friends to go out and they would all say they were going to bed because there was nothing worth going out to, and it would be 10 o'clock on a Saturday night! I wanted to create a place for my age group where you are not just let loose in a room with a drink in your hand."

After years of working in the cosmetics industry embellishing the looks of renowned personalities like Naomi Simms, Barbara Walters, Iman, and Beverly Johnson, Barnes wanted to give something back to the community.

"I had literally done everyone in the industry. There was not an eye or lip that I had not lined. I wanted a new challenged. I always say you have to know when to leave the party...before they put you out !!!", he chuckles. "I thought that I was good at hosting and planning. I always gave these big elaborate parties that people absolutely loved, so I wanted to do some sort of social club."

"It is not a new concept, it is an old concept with a new twist," he continues. "Comfort Zone is a modern throw back to what gay life was like around the Harlem Renaissance. When there were no gay bars and it was almost illegal to speak the word gay or homosexual; when gay people gathered in private homes to socialize be-

creating a r

ew comfort zone

Chip, Tim, Byron, Christian

"I would love to see a chain of Comfort Zones opened up i Atlanta, Chicago and Washington D.C. Everyone aesthetically pleasing, here you can say hello and smile a

cause they were a safe haven from a world that hated you and mistreated you because you were gay."

With what he calls a ghettoization of gay life, Barnes points out the need for an alternative to current clubs. "I am supplying something that people wanted but did not have," Byron says confidently. "With the explosion of hip hop as the popular culture, gays and lesbians have taken on some of the homophobic posturing of the rap culture." The younger kids like a place that is extremely anonymous were they do not have to say who they are or what their interest are. A place where everybody is holding up the wall, no one speaks, no one is introduced and there is no universal congeniality. They do not develop any social skills. It is a new thing that stems from gay people wanting to be perceived as straight even to each other," Barnes remarks. "Homophobic homosexuals. These are the type of things which keep us from making good mates for each other."

"There are a ton of intelligent professional black men. I just do not think that there are places where they can BE intelligent."

At one time gay people did not want to be perceived as straight. There was a time when we all twirled and wore blouses because we had pride in our gayness and you knew who where and you had a culture that supported.

As minority gays we have become apathetic when it come to our environment and the places we frequent because we have accepted certain conditions as normal. The fact that a place may not have something as simple as running water and clean bathrooms is not the exception but the norm. No one complains to the management. We accept it.

Comfort Zone is a combination of sultry afro-chicness reminiscent of "Looking for Langston" and the legendary decadence of "Paris is Burning" without the shade, separated into five distinct areas called "Zones".

Cross the doorstep and you immediately step into Zone I: "Community", where after being warmly greet by a host, you are invited too literally "Eat, drink, and be merry." Guests feel at home greeting old friends and making new ones while sampling from the complimentary buffet and open bar. Zone II, "Tranquillity," is the stylishly put together smoke free conversational lounge. A tasteful modern Afrocentric setting wher you'll see artists and authors, thinkers and leaders conversing about philosophy rather than who they had lasts night. In the 1920s you might have seen Claude McKay or Zora Neale Hurston. Today you may spot will authors like E. Lynn Harris chillin' with a hot wing.

Prior to moving into Zone III called "Simplicity," you must place your shoes in the lux silk lined shoe closet. After all this is the barefoot audio and visual space. Complimented by surround sound and full cable access, this is the perfect area to romp with a prospective date, read, or even meditate. Zone IV is Innovative Fitness Group, "Mobility" for short. This state of art private gym facility is available on an unsupervised

places like
wants a place that is
each other." —*Byron Barnes*

daily or weekly basis offering a variety of activities from physical therapy to self-defense. "Sensuality" is Zone V where you can enjoy a slow dance or a full body massage.

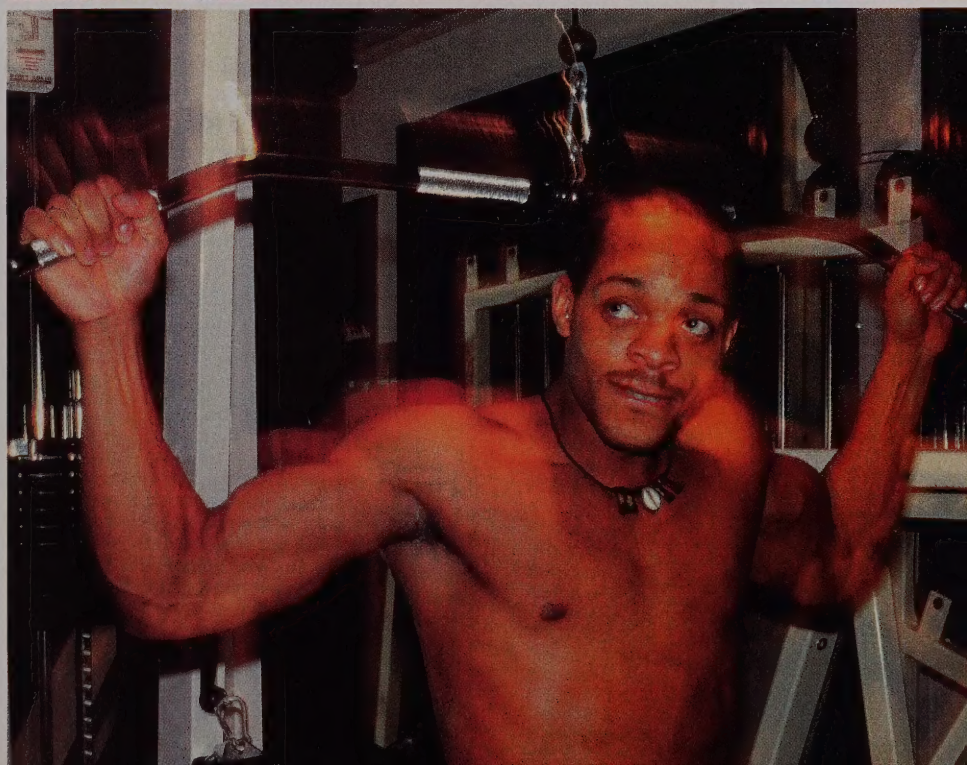
Aside from being a social gathering place, Comfort Zone hosts a variety of events including birthday parties to weddings. The doors are always open to community related organizations.

"I would love to see a chain of Comfort Zones opened up in places like Atlanta, Chicago and Washington, D.C. Everyone wants a place that is aesthetically pleasing, where you can say hello and smile at each other.

A place where you can sit and be comfortable and most of all where there is a service orientated staff. A staff that is professional and helpful.

Most of all people want a place were they can be themselves. People want to feel special. Ultimately we are all responsible for creating comfortable zones for each other.

—Quohnos Mitchell



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TINA PAUL

Mary and

A gifted playwright, performer, and professor, Dr. Shirlene Holmes originally selected "Mary and Lou" from her fictional Cotsville Stories series for Venus readers in early 1995. Back by popular demand, we now revisit the town of Cotsville!

Mary and Lou were bulldaggers. I can't say it no plainer than that. Everybody in Cotsville, from the front of the town to the back, knew Mary was a woman to her heart, but Lou had mannish ways. Lou even looked like a man with her plaid work shirt on and muddy construction worker boots.

It made Mother Martha's flesh crawl just to think about it; how in the world could two women's get together like that. She didn't like to mind people's business, but there was some things that even God don't like and that woman-for-woman mess was one of them things.

Clevertta didn't like them either and she would get on the phone with Teresa and talk loud about how Mary and Lou was living in sin and God was gonna clean their playhouse up one of these days. Teresa said, "Yes, chile, we can't have that around here with our children watching."

They both spent long dimes talking about how they wondered what bulldaggers did in bed. Clevertta said, "I can't be AC running on a DC current; give me a man. Two of 'em if you got 'em."

Teresa said, "I know what you mean, girl. All women can do for me is point me to the nearest man; shit, I wanna be satisfied, not frustrated."

Mary and Lou had long got over worrying about what people think and say. They had been together ten years. They had stuck it out and moving to Cotsville wasn't gonna change them none. Lou knew when she was a girl that sex and men don't mix. She had a Jamaican boy once and when the bleeding stopped, that was it. It was much harder for Mary at first. She had been married twelve years with one daughter and it took a lot to change her mind. What she liked about being with Lou is that she could be close to her and not be afraid.

Something special about talking to another woman, there's so much you don't have to explain. Loving a woman outside the bed was easy for Mary, but when it come to getting in the bed with a woman, that was the hardest thing to do for a long while. When she and Lou got together the first time, you couldn't tell Mary that God wasn't gonna set them on fire right in that bed.

But it never happened.

For a long time Missionary Porter kept telling everybody, the two were just friends. But wasn't no way in hell Magnolia and Gardenioa, the Flowers' twin girls, was gonna believe that Mary and Lou was just friends. Magnolia say they was Soddom and Go-morrah people and they going to hell sure as you're born. Gardenia say, "now, come on, sister, God got more sense than that. He's gonna leave them right here so we can see how not to live." Mother Martha would just shake her head and mumble about how queasy her stomach got every time Mary and Lou walked by.

Sometimes Lou and Mary wondered why in the hell they moved to Cotsville anyway knowing how much people hated them. They had put their mobile home in that town just till they could get their money together; that was five years ago. They kept saying they was gonna move, but every time spring come, they loved the place more and more. Not for the people, but for the trees and grass and lazy dogs that came and sat in their yard each day.

When they needed a laugh, Mary and Lou would stop and talk about that get-acquainted barbecue they had when they first moved to Cotsville. They wanted people to see they was normal and nice. Several folks came to that Fourth of July cook out and ate like pigs. Mother Martha stuffed herself so full, Clovis Jr. had to hold her steady as she waddled home. Clevertta sniffed all the food before she ate it, just to make sure it was sanitary. Betty Lou wouldn't even use the restroom; she walked all the way home and had to pee so bad when she got there, she could almost taste it. Mary and Lou knew it was the itch of their curiosity that drove everybody to the Fourth of July affair. They gave up on the people of Cotsville and decided to stay to themselves.

The only one that befriended them was Missionary Porter who didn't care

Lou

what they was doing. They was Jesus' children and she didn't pay the people in Cotsville no mind. Mildred kept telling the Missionary that she'd get a "nasty woman's disease" if she went in that trailer and used the toilet.

But Missionary paid Mildred no never mind and pressed her way. Joe Kellum put it out in the streets that Missionary was "one of them thespian women" and had a sweet thing in St. Louie. This was a boldfaced lie cause Missionary didn't know a living or dead soul in that city.

The first time Missionary knocked on the door to the mobile home, Lou wondered what in the hell did this old woman want. She wasn't in no mood for no he say, she say shit, nor was she ready for another Jesus sermon. And she wasn't gonna put up with no interrogation, not today.

Mary jumped up to tidy things, though the house was clean as a church.

The smell of the cornbread came in before Missionary Porter did. "Thought you sweet girls would want some of my bread. There's a pound of butter in it."

Lou was softened by her seventy year old face. "Thank you, ma'am," Mary said taking the bread to the kitchenette.

Missionary Porter continued, "I'm glad to find ya'll home. I didn't have your number to call. I hope you don't think I ain't polite cause my mother raised me right."

"That's alright, Mrs. Porter," Mary said.

The only one that befriended them was Missionary Porter who didn't care what they was doing. They was Jesus' children and she didn't pay the people in Cotsville no mind.

"Call me, Missionary, baby, that would mean all the world to me."

None of them could think of a word to say, so they sat there, the fan whirring, and the ball game playing quietly on the radio.

"Can I offer you some lemonade, Missionary?" Lou asked. "Yes, baby, My whistle is a little dry; I could appreciate that now. Is that made from that resubstituted stuff or the real thing?"

"It's the real thing," Mary offered, trying to comfort.

They sat and sipped and each stared in a different direction. After about twenty minutes, Missionary pulled herself from the chair and headed home. The rest of the night was full of expectancy as if something had not come out or been said. Lou stayed up late warring inside. Mary went on to bed but the covers entangled her like two great arms and shook her restless. They were scared to touch the cornbread. Mary finally broke down and Lou ate some from her mouth. It was the best they'd ever tasted.

Missionary knocked seven days later,

mopping her forehead with a hanky that had lace all around the rim. "Girls, I'm glad I could get back to see you. Aren't you glad?"

"Yes," Mary said smiling, giving into the old woman.

Lou just nodded in affirmation. The visit was easier. Missionary Porter asked them if they wanted to come to revival to hear the Reverend C.W. Gillespie preach. They declined not because they didn't want to go, but because they had tickets to the show at the university theater that weekend.

Missionary left after thumbing through their many photographs and giving Mary plenty of medicine advice, like putting an onion in your sock when you have a fever, laying on the Bible to stop a headache, and two teaspoons of white vinegar for each quart of water would beat any woman's disease.

Still the air was full. They shared another heavy night. Lou neither Mary went to work the next morning. They thought maybe Missionary Porter was bringing spirits in or working roots on them; the strangeness of this new relationship was a strain.

Three days later the old woman returned. This time with a sweet potato pie still warm from the oven. When she handed it over, Mary felt like she was receiving a just-born baby in a bunting. They cut into it quickly. Lou savored her portion like a woman's breast. Mary was careful not to drop a crumb and even Missionary, who baked these weekly, had to confess she had put a hurting on that pie. After eating, they sighed and sat still. Missionary could be heard rolling an ice cube around in her mouth and crushing it between her dentures.

Someone had to speak, so she did. "Baby girls, you all know I'm a sanctified woman."

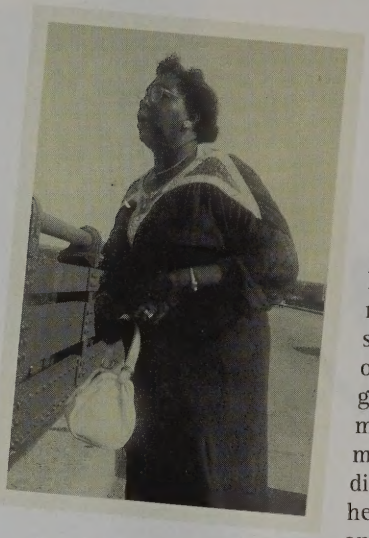
They affirmed with a nod.

"And you know I'm water-baptized, holy ghost-filled, and running for my life."

They believed it was true.

"Something I got to say, been wanting to say it since I been in your place. I wouldn't tell you nothing wrong. I asked God to give me the words to say. Lou got sour right off cause she knew what was coming. Why did this old woman have to destroy this evening with a sermon, a testimony, a reprimand. She had heard them all. Lou wanted to make the woman quiet up, fill her with more pie, but Mary moved a little closer to her companion and one slight touch stilled the waters. The confession began.

"When I was you age, Mary, I knew a woman name Margaret. She had hair white as a cotton flower and light black skin. And if you'll pardon me, Miss Lou, there wasn't nothing woman about her 'cept the hint of red lipstick she always wore. I don't know why I was drawn to her, but I truly was. She learned me so many things about God and about myself. I don't think I knew anything about myself till I met Margaret. Don't get me wrong; I knew God, but me, I didn't know about me. She learn me that I got every element inside me. I got a shower and I got a fire. I got a wind and I got an earth.



I believe God sent her to me. She was an evangelist, who had made up in her mind from the time she was eleven years old that she was gonna live without men and from the moment I met her, I did too. I used to make her sweet 'tayta pie and she'd read me the Bible. I ain't never heard nothing like it. Seem like all those folks in the Bible just got up and walked when she read to me. We'd sit and she'd vision this great ministry she would have. It come to true, I know, cause I traveled with her for fifteen years. The last stop was here in Cotsville where after a Sunday evening service, she died in my arms."

'Don't tell things of understanding to a fool.' That's what Margaret used to say. People in Cotsville think with a carnal mind, not a spirit one, remember that.

The silence in the room got so deep and wide. Mary craved to hold Lou's hand, as Missionary began rocking back and forth, tears brimming but never falling from her eyes. Lou left for the bathroom. When she returned Missionary was finishing her lemonade. The old woman kissed both of their hands and turned to leave. As she remembered, she paused.

"What I told ya'll is nothing to tell others. That's just a present for the two of you. 'Don't tell things of understanding to a fool.' That's what Margaret used to say. People in Cotsville think with a carnal mind, not a spirit one, remember that. Half the people sending folks to hell is going themselves; hell's gonna be so full, you're gonna need a reservation to get in. I love you girls so much, not just because you Jesus' children, but because you done learn how to suffer for what you want. God sees and knows."

When the door latched behind her, Mary and Lou wrapped themselves together and mixed their tears.

Missionary Porter came back often, but this was the visit they never talked about again.

Gladys Bentley (1907-1960)

Gladys Bentley lit up cafe society in the 1920s and '30s singing bawdy lyrics based on popular tunes of the day. Dressed in top hat and tails, Bentley put on the ritz in Harlem's "Jungle Alley"—a strip of clubs between Lenox and Seventh Avenues on 133rd Street. She performed at the most famous gay-oriented club of the era—Harry Hansberry's Clam House, a speakeasy also on 133rd Street. According to Eric Garber in an article on the Jazz Age in Harlem, "Bentley, a masculine, dark-skinned lesbian, performed all night long in a white tuxedo and top hat... Langston Hughes called her an amazing exhibition of musical energy." Eslanda Goode Robeson, wife of actor Paul Robeson, gushed to a friend, "Gladys Bentley is grand! I've heard her three nights and will never be the same." Educator Harold Jackman wrote to his friend Countee Cullen, "When Gladys sings 'St. James Infirmary,' it makes you weep your heart out."

In her act she openly and riotously flirted with women in the audience and often had a chorus line of men backing her. Bentley parlayed her talent and notoriety into a Park Avenue apartment, servants, and a beautiful car.

Alas, things fall apart. Prohibition sent her white clientele back downtown to new speakeasies and the Depression drew the final curtain on an era when white society went to Harlem in diamonds and furs. Bentley left New York for Los Angeles where she performed sporadically. Fearing the results of McCarthyism and succumbing to a society that had become harsher toward gays, Bentley, in 1950, wrote an article for *Ebony* entitled "I Am a Woman Again," in which she claimed to have cured her lesbianism by way of female hormone treatments. A decade later, she was about to be ordained as a minister when she died of influenza in 1960 at the age of fifty-two. She had fought the good fight for lesbians. In the end had she truly changed? Only Gladys Bentley really knows.

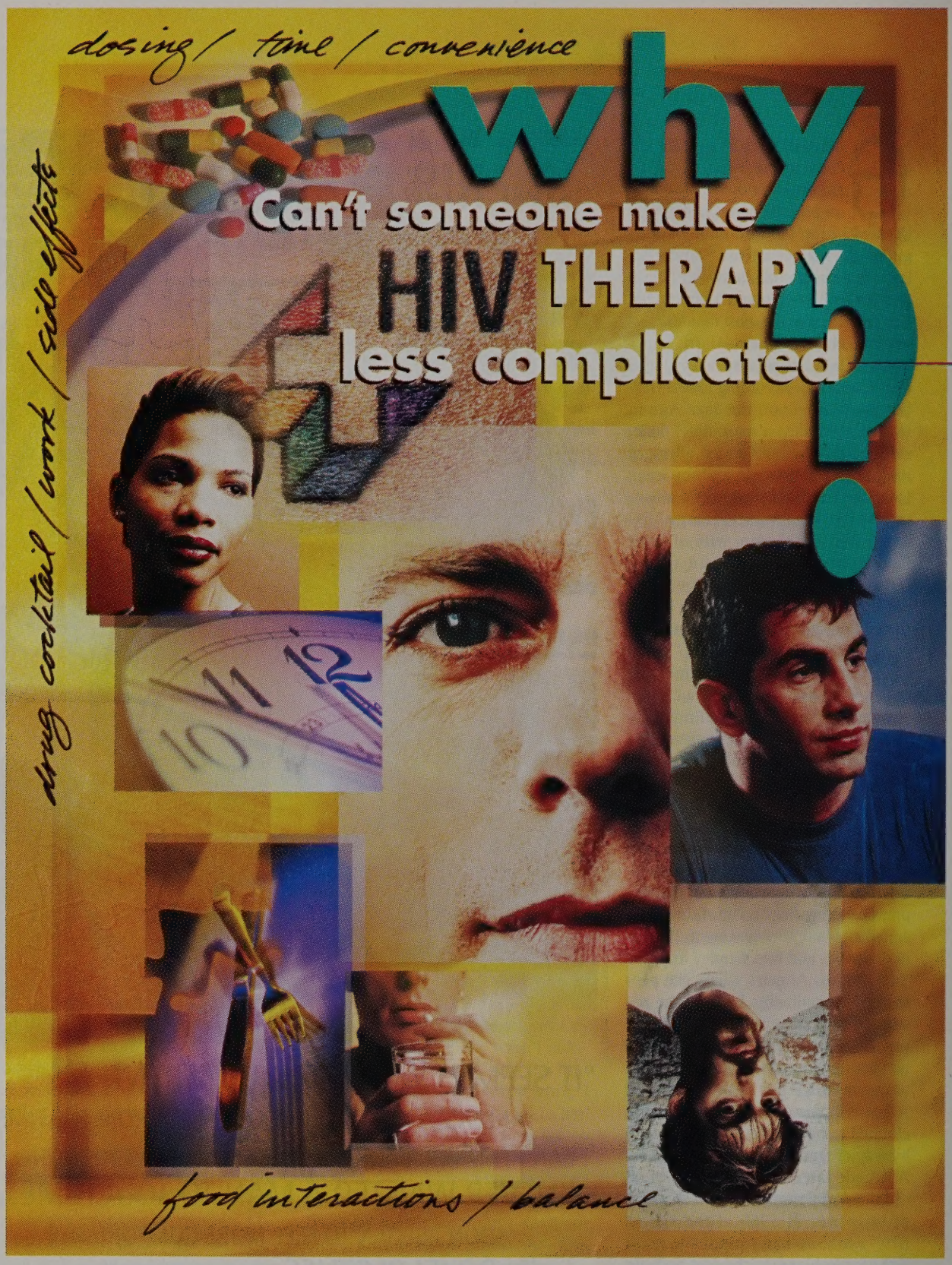
- Phil Petrie

PHOTO COURTESY BLACK PATTI RESEARCH

A LESBIAN WHO SANG THE BLUES

"IT SEEMS I WAS BORN DIFFERENT. AT LEAST, I ALWAYS THOUGHT SO.... FROM THE TIME I CAN REMEMBER ANYTHING, EVEN AS I WAS TODDLING, I NEVER WANTED A MAN TO TOUCH ME... SOON I BEGAN TO FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE IN BOYS' CLOTHES THAN IN DRESSES."

Gladys Bentley, *Ebony 1950*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?
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New SUSTIVA™ is the first HIV drug approved to be taken once-a-day as part of your combination therapy. Just take three 200 mg capsules together once daily, with or without food; high fat meals should be avoided. Your doctor may suggest taking SUSTIVA at bedtime to reduce any side effects you may experience.

SUSTIVA, an NNRTI*, must be used in combination with other HIV drugs.

SUSTIVA is tough on HIV. It reduces the amount of virus in your blood and increases the number of CD4 cells. SUSTIVA can even be used in young children, 3 years of age or older. This is based on results from controlled clinical trials at 24 weeks. Presently, there are no results from controlled clinical trials showing the long-term effects of SUSTIVA.

SUSTIVA has manageable side effects. Most side effects are mild to moderate and can be managed. The most significant side effects associated with SUSTIVA therapy have been nervous system symptoms (dizziness, trouble sleeping, drowsiness, trouble concentrating and/or abnormal dreams) and rash. These usually subside within the first two to four weeks of treatment. In a small number of patients, rash may be serious. Taking SUSTIVA at bedtime may help make nervous system symptoms less noticeable.

Pregnancy should be avoided in women receiving SUSTIVA because birth defects have been seen in primates dosed with SUSTIVA. Barrier contraception should always be used in combination with other methods of contraception.

Talk to your doctor when you start taking SUSTIVA. SUSTIVA may change the effect of other medicines (including ones for HIV). Always tell your doctor if you are taking, starting or changing any prescription or non-prescription medicine when taking SUSTIVA. Your doctor may change your medicines or change their dose. You should discuss your prior medical conditions (such as mental illness, substance abuse, hepatitis, etc.) with your doctor before taking SUSTIVA.

We know that coping with HIV is difficult enough. Your treatment doesn't have to be. Ask your doctor about SUSTIVA. For more important information see the next page for Patient Information about SUSTIVA.

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Finally, a once daily medication to treat HIV.

SUSTIVA. It's about time.

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*NNRTI - non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor.

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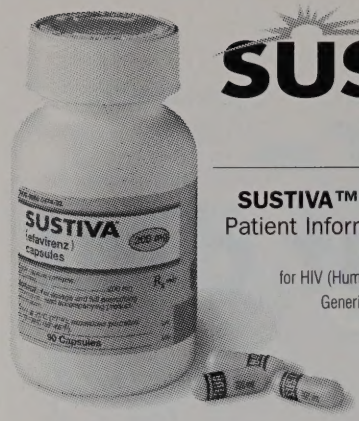

Once Daily
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SUSTIVA™ (efavirenz) capsules
Patient Information about SUSTIVA*
(sus-TEE-vah)
for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: efavirenz (eh-FAH-vih-rehnz)

Please read this information before you start taking SUSTIVA. Read it again each time you refill your prescription, in case there is any new information. Don't treat this leaflet as your only source of information about SUSTIVA. Always discuss SUSTIVA with your doctor when you start taking your medicine and at every visit. You should remain under a doctor's care when using SUSTIVA. You should not change or stop treatment without first talking to your doctor.

What is SUSTIVA?

SUSTIVA is a medicine used to help treat HIV, the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). SUSTIVA is a type of HIV drug called a "non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor" (NNRTI).

How does SUSTIVA work?

SUSTIVA works by lowering the amount of HIV in the blood (called "viral load"). SUSTIVA must be taken with other anti-HIV medicines. When taken with other anti-HIV medicines, SUSTIVA has been shown to reduce viral load and increase the number of CD4 cells (a type of immune cell in blood). SUSTIVA may not have these effects in every patient.

Does SUSTIVA cure HIV or AIDS?

SUSTIVA is not a cure for HIV or AIDS. People taking SUSTIVA may still develop other infections associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important that you remain under the care of your doctor.

Does SUSTIVA reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

SUSTIVA has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others. Continue to practice safe sex, and do not use or share dirty needles.

How should I take SUSTIVA?

- The dose of SUSTIVA for adults is 600 mg (three 200 mg capsules, taken together) once a day by mouth. The dose of SUSTIVA for children may be lower (see **Can children take SUSTIVA?**).
- Take SUSTIVA at the same time each day. You should take SUSTIVA at bedtime during the first few weeks or if you have side effects, such as dizziness or trouble concentrating (see **What are the possible side effects of SUSTIVA?**).
- Swallow SUSTIVA with water, juice, milk or soda. You may take SUSTIVA with or without meals; however, SUSTIVA should not be taken with a high fat meal.
- Do not miss a dose of SUSTIVA. If you forget to take SUSTIVA, take the missed dose right away. If you do miss a dose, do not double the next dose. Carry on with your regular dosing schedule. If you need help in planning the best times to take your medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- Take the exact amount of SUSTIVA your doctor prescribes. Never change the dose on your own. Do not stop this medicine unless your doctor tells you to stop.
- When your SUSTIVA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to SUSTIVA and become harder to treat.

Can children take SUSTIVA?

Yes, children who are able to swallow capsules can take SUSTIVA. Rash may be a serious problem in some children. Tell your child's doctor right away if you notice rash or any other side effects while your child is taking SUSTIVA. The dose of SUSTIVA for children may be lower than the dose for adults. Capsules containing lower doses of SUSTIVA are available. Your child's doctor will determine the right dose based on your child's weight.

Who should not take SUSTIVA?

Do not take SUSTIVA if you are allergic to SUSTIVA or any of its ingredients.

What other medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my doctor?

Talk to your doctor right away if you:

- Are pregnant or want to become pregnant
- Are breast-feeding
- Have problems with your liver, or have had hepatitis
- Start or change any medicine
- Have side effects while taking SUSTIVA (efavirenz)
- Have a history of mental illness, substance or alcohol abuse

What are the possible side effects of SUSTIVA?

Many patients have dizziness, trouble sleeping, drowsiness, trouble concentrating, and/or unusual dreams a few hours after starting treatment with SUSTIVA. These feelings may be less noticeable if you take SUSTIVA at bedtime. They also tend to go away after you've taken the medicine for a few weeks. Rarely, patients have more serious side effects that may affect mood or ability to think clearly. These side effects occur more often in patients with a history of mental illness or substance abuse. Tell your doctor promptly if any of these side effects continue or if they bother you. There is the possibility that these symptoms may be more severe if SUSTIVA is used with alcohol or mood altering (street) drugs. You should avoid driving or operating machinery if you are having these side effects.

One of the most common side effects is rash. These rashes usually go away without any change in treatment. In a small number of patients, rash may be serious. If you develop a rash, call your doctor promptly.

Other common side effects include tiredness, upset stomach, vomiting, and diarrhea. However, this is not a complete list of side effects reported with SUSTIVA when taken with other anti-HIV drugs. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about side effects. Your doctor can discuss a more complete list of side effects with you.

Please contact your doctor immediately before stopping SUSTIVA because of side effects. Tell your doctor or other healthcare provider if you notice any side effects while taking SUSTIVA.

What about birth control, pregnancy, or breast-feeding?

Women should not become pregnant while taking SUSTIVA. Birth defects have been seen in animals treated with SUSTIVA. It is not known whether this could happen in humans. You should use a condom or diaphragm in addition to other methods of birth control while taking SUSTIVA. Inform your doctor immediately if you are pregnant. If you want to become pregnant, talk to your doctor. Do not take SUSTIVA if you are breast-feeding. Talk to your doctor if you are breast-feeding your baby.

Can I take other medicines with SUSTIVA?

SUSTIVA may change the effect of other medicines (including ones for HIV). Your doctor may change your medicines or change their doses. For this reason, it is very important to:

- Let all your doctors and pharmacists know that you take SUSTIVA.
- Tell your doctors and pharmacists about all medicines you take. This includes those you buy over-the-counter and herbal or natural remedies.

Bring all your medicines when you see a doctor, or make a list of their names, how much you take, and how often you take them. This will give your doctor a complete picture of the medicines you use. Then he or she can decide the best approach for your situation.

The following medicines may cause serious and life-threatening side effects when taken with SUSTIVA. You should not take any of these medicines while taking SUSTIVA:**

- Hismanal® (astemizole)
- Propulsid® (cisapride)
- Versed® (midazolam)
- Halcion® (triazolam)
- Ergot medications (for example, Wigraine® and Cafergot®)

The following medicines may need to be changed or have their dose changed when taken with SUSTIVA:**

- Crixivan® (indinavir)
- Fortovase® (saquinavir)
- Biaxin® (clarithromycin)

How should I keep SUSTIVA?

SUSTIVA is available as 50 mg, 100 mg, and 200 mg capsules.

Keep SUSTIVA at room temperature (77°F) in the bottle given to you by your pharmacist. The temperature can range from 59°-86°F.

Keep SUSTIVA out of the reach of children.

How can I learn more about SUSTIVA?

Talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider if you have questions about either SUSTIVA or HIV. For additional information you can visit the SUSTIVA website at http://www.sustiva.com.

This medicine was prescribed for your particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep SUSTIVA out of the reach of children. If you suspect that more than the prescribed dose of this medicine has been taken, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

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DuPont Pharmaceuticals
Wilmington, DE 19880
Issued September, 1998

Remembering Reggie Williams

Photo by Ron Singleton

AIDS and black gay activist Reggie Williams, who in the early 1980s "was one of the first to recognize that information and prevention efforts were not reaching the gay and bisexual black community," died Feb. 7 of AIDS-related complications at age 47. A celebration of his life will be held at San Francisco City Hall on his birthday, April 29. The San Francisco Chronicle reports that Williams, who was HIV positive for the past 13 years, was founding director of the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention, which worked to raise [HIV awareness and Prevention for Gay and Bisexual men of all colors]

In 1980, Williams founded the National Association of Black and White Men Together to, purge the white gay community of its bias against black gays. In December of 1989, he took his messages to the streets and led a protest in Washington, DC, "demanding more federal funds for AIDS research, as well as food, shelter, and health care for AIDS patients around the nation" (Pimsleur, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/15/99). Williams' friend and colleague Phill Wilson said, "What he said is that it was unhealthy to compartmentalize our identities. There was not ever a discrete point where one's blackness ended and one's gayness began. What we all understood, what Reggie understood, is that AIDS really was a symptom. It was a symptom, a metaphor, for what happens in the absence of self-affirming community and identity. Reggie was an AIDS pioneer" (Wright, *Washington Blade*, 2/12/99). Many African American Gay and Lesbian activist attribute their work, dedication, and inspiration to the tutelage of Reggie Williams.

We will sorely miss you Reggie.

- Edited by Maurice Franklin

COMPILED AN D PHOTOGRAPHED
BY RON SINGLETON

Does your mama know that you're gay?

Everyone's got a story about how their parents found out about their being in the life. For those of you who think your parents don't know "because you've never discussed it," get over it! All parents KNOW. They may not WANT to know but they do. I mean come on, you're thirty years old, still have a "roommate," and seem completely uninterested in the opposite sex. Pa-leeeze! Not only does your Mama know, but the rest of your family knows too. Just for the record we asked a few people about their stories!

Martina Downey, 35+ Sales Representative, Publishing Industry, Brooklyn, NY

"Yes, my parents do know I am lesbian. I told them in 1982. They kind of asked me if I were gay, and I said, 'yeah'. They kind of got upset, and threw me out of the house. Now we're sort of stand offish, but in a neutral zone.

There's no animosity, I've forgiven them. They've evolved in some ways, but they still can't make that change, that break with themselves I'm still hoping for. I'm still working towards that, but I know that my church family is my real family, the community that I belong to is my real family."

Asabi Baye Davis, 43, Painter/Construction Worker, Irvington, NJ

"Yes my parents know. I really didn't tell them, they asked my sister when I was about eighteen years old and I left home and moved in with my first girlfriend. But I came up in a family where I have two gay aunts, so it was always there in the family and it really wasn't a problem."

Trina Lamb, 28, Agency Service Rep, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Irvington, NJ

"Yes, my mother found out by accident when I was approximately thirteen years old. She came into the bathroom and saw me kissing my girlfriend.

After that experience, however, and the shock, she was quite comfortable with it and said 'as long as you're happy, I totally support you and I love you because you're my daughter!'"

"who said that?"

"We must open the wounds of slavery and oppression to heal them and to truly bring liberty and justice and the pursuit of happiness to everyone, including those of different sexual orientations, and to finally unite ALL of the people as God's family."

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, speaking at Ebeneezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA.

"People who are gay haven't chosen their sexual orientation. It must be a crazy person who chooses to be gay in such a homophobic world. Let's work for real tolerance."

—Archbishop Tutu, receiving an honorary doctorate from Bishop's University, in an English-speaking enclave east of Montreal.

McNamara

"Magic Johnson is a dangerous image because he leads the public to believe that you can take 3 HIV cocktails a day and have a healthy normal life opening up movie theatres, and hosting T.V. shows."

"Large churches are like drive-in movies theaters. Everyone is watching the movie but sitting in their own car with the windows up so no one talks to each other. The individual does not become responsible to their church. Heterosexuals in Black churches are in the closet about HIV and so it has taken a toll on their children. I would like to pass out condoms in the collection plate!" "Brothers and Sisters need to bring their sexuality to the forefront and invade the Black church about accepting their homosexual congregation."

—Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, author, in a keynote speech at the 12th National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Conference, Atlanta, GA

ATTENTION BROTHAS AND SISTAHS!
Have you received an Award, Promotion, Commitment, New Baby?
Send your announcements with a recent photo to:
Venus Magazine
P.O. Box 150
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706

Outstanding!

BRENDA CRAWFORD has been selected as the1999 Outstanding Woman Of The Year In Community Service in Alameda County, CA by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, The Commission On the Status Of Women and The Alameda County Health Care Foundation. She will be permanently inducted into the Alameda County Women's Hall Of Frame. This is the first time that this award has been given to an out, African American Lesbian.

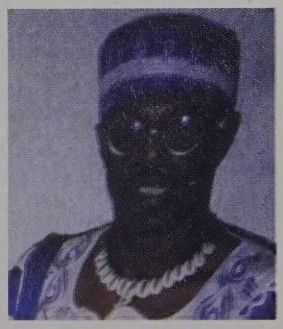
"I am humbled, and honored by this award," said Crawford from her office in Oakland. "What I think this really means is that the African American LGBT community in Alameda County, primarily in Oakland has been working for years to increase our visibility, and political involvement, and some of that work is finally starting to pay off. Most of us just want what all Americans want, and are entitled to; full inclusion, and protection under the law."

MARY F. MORTEN was appointed by the The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) to its Board of Directors. A native of Chicago, Morten has a long history of work within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and progressive communities. In 1997, Mayor Richard Daley appointed Morten to the position of Director and Liaison for the Advisory Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues, a position she still holds. She was the first African-American president of the Chicago chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and was inducted in 1996 into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame for her outstanding contributions to that community. She has also served as a host on Chicago's Lesbigay Radio.

"I have always been a fan and a follower of GLAAD's work," said Morten. "I'm excited to join the national board, where I will be able to bring the perspective of community activism and government advocacy on behalf of the lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender community. Ensuring a diverse and inclusive representation of our community in the media is of primary importance to me. I look forward to working to bring GLAAD's vital work to the attention of our colleagues in Chicago and throughout the Midwest."

MS. RAMONA BRIDGES, was promoted to Deputy Director of Youth Services department at the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, after working as a Youth Advocate since 1995. The Youth Services department of the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center is the only organization in the city offering transitional living and educational programs, as well as health and emergency services designed especially for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth. Ms. Bridges holds a BA in Psychology from Pomona College in Clarement, CA. A native of Austin, Texas, she has lived in L.A. for twenty years.

MS. KATHRYN WHITE, was recently promoted to Director of Special Events for the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center. This is her fourth promotion in the four and a half years she has worked for the Gay and Lesbian Center. Ms. White will be responsible for such signature events as "Black Satin: A Tribute to the Legendary Female Jazz and Blues Singers" and the annual "Women's Night," the largest lesbian dinner and dance in the world. Special Events are expected to raise more than one million dollars for vital social, educational and health services at the L.A. Gay and Lesbian center in the next year. Ms. White also serves on the Board of Directors for the Alcoholism Center for Women and, when she has a moment, she enjoys painting and spending time with her talking parrot, Mekeeda, and cat, Nunu. Ms. White is a native of L.A.



CARL DE VINE, I was honored with an Unsung Hero award for his continuous and tireless effort on behalf of people with AIDS. The Unsung Hero award was awarded to De Vine, by 100 Black Men of America, the National Council of Negro Women, and the National Black Caucus. The Unsung Hero award recipients are selected by the Center for Disease Control. Carl DeVine is a true unsung hero and a man committed to the fight against AIDS.

He said, "I didn't want to do it (fight AIDS), but if I didn't, who would?"

RON SINGLETON

Sex Talk

Q: I have been separated from my lover of three years, for several months. He claimed that I was not as sexually and emotionally expressive as he would like. He interpreted this, to some extent, as representing a lack of love on my part, and he left the relationship. I have worked on myself with this issue and feel that I'm ready to fully express how very much I do love him—sexually and emotionally. I have wanted a second chance, but now I'm not sure. My problem is this. My best friend of twelve years knows I want to return to my ex-lover. He has revealed to me that my ex-lover has made overt sexual advances towards him and several other men in our circle. This happened while we were still together. Is my ex-lover untrustworthy or was this my fault because of my sexual problems?

SIGNED,
GUILTY AND UNTRUSTING

A: Your situation brings up many questions. Did sexual behaviors actually occur between your best friend and ex-lover? And, did they occur with "the circle of men"? Was "safe" sex involved? Did your best friend have sexual feelings towards you? However, I shall attempt to remain focused on the most relevant issues. First, congratulations on taking charge of yourself and improving in those much-needed areas. No need, however, to feel guilty. You did not produce your partner's untrustworthy sexual behavior. He is responsible for his behavior. The two of you were, indeed, having sexual issues. But that your partner chose to solve these outside of the relationship, speaks of commitment and fidelity issues more than sexual issues. The question you might prefer to ask of yourself is "Can I trust this wonderful vulnerable gift of sexual and emotional expression to someone who is not committed to me?" I suspect this might be the cause of your issues from the onset.

Geanie Bond is a licensed marriage and family therapist in Atlanta, GA. Contact her at 404-256-6709.

Ask Marian

Q: I am 39 years old and have been with my partner for over 8 years. I have built my career and now I want to have a baby. The problem is I keep talking about it but feel stuck. I am leaning towards having a biological child. I would have artificial insemination. However, I am passionate about family history and my cultural heritage and it is important to me to know the family roots of my child's father. I don't know any men who would be willing or suitable as a donor. Plus, my partner is lukewarm to the whole idea. She has three children of her own. I guess I don't want to go through all this feeling like I am on my own. Family is everything to me.

SIGNED LUKE WARM

A: What a wonderful desire you have, to have baby! The concerns you bring up are deeply personal and are about what you want and how much you want it in a world whose dominant model of parenting is biologically-centered. Considered all your options if you choose the biological route: artificial insemination through a known or unknown donor, in-vitro fertilization (you can have your partner's egg fertilized then implanted in your own womb), or surrogacy (your fertilized egg is implanted in another woman's womb). Costs can soar depending on the method. There are legal considerations to all these options including co-parenting agreements, donor-recipient agreements, second-parent adoption, and guardianship. Living your life as a lesbian is probably a departure from your dominant cultural roots. Consider reframing your concern about losing family roots by recognizing that cultures throughout the world prescribe that children take their name and their parentage from their mother. Find out all your partner's fears and get counseling if you are still stuck.

Below is a list of organizations that may be able to address your questions and put you in touch with information and support. Remember, by not choosing to act, you make a choice.

Love Makes a Family Inc.
P.O. Box 11694
Portland OR 97211
(503) 228-3892

Center Kids, The Family Project
Lesbian/Gay Community Services Ctr
208 West 13th St.
New York, N.Y. 10011
(212) 620-7310

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force
Family Issues Project
1517 U St. NW
Washington D.C. 20009
(202) 332-6483
Lesbian & Gay Parenting Project

c/o Lyon-Martin Clinic
2480 Mission Street, Suite 214
San Francisco CA 94110
(415) 525-7312

Let's TALK ABOUT SEX

and a possible vaccine for HIV!

Sexually active, HIV negative men needed for an HIV vaccine research study. You cannot get AIDS from the vaccine.

For information call toll free: **(877) 6-VAXGEN**

(877) 682-9436

Photo: E. Kotila, Berkeley © 1999

ArtsTour 2000 Puts African Diaspora LGBT Artists Center Stage

Planning is already underway for a historic national tour of black l/g/b/t writers, visual and performing artists. ArtsTour 2000, is the brainchild of publisher/author Alaric Wendell Blair (An End of Innocence, a journey into the life, Mirage Publishing 1998), and stems from a recent gathering of black writers at the Behind Our Masks Conference in Washington, D.C. in October 1998.

The tour, which welcomes new and established artists from all disciplines, will celebrate the arts and letters of l/g/b/t of African descent by creating venues for their work and will serve to offer greater visibility of black queer artists. Among the many artists nationwide who have already pledged their time and service to this groundbreaking project, are James Earl Hardy (B-Boy Blues), Sharon Bridgeforth (Bull Jean Stories), Kathleen Morris (Speaking In Whispers), G. Winston James (Other-Countries Anthologies), Lisa Moore (Redbone Press/Does Your Mama Know), Robert E. Penn (Gay Men's Wellness Guide), Ricc Rollins (Like Breathing), Dwayne Carter (The Best Man), Lorenzo C. Robertson (Me, Myself & I). and filmmaker Aishah Simmons (NO!) The tour is also supported by such organizations as Venus Magazine, Clique Magazine, Ishai Books and the National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum.

Representatives from ArtsTour will be on hand at the Unity V Conference in Chicago April 16-18 and the 2nd Annual BOOK HOUSE CAFE Reader/Writer/Publisher Workshop Book Signing, which will be held in Oakland on June 19, 1999.

Additionally, information can be obtained by sending an email to: ArtsTour2000@egroups.com.

Corrections Some names of individuals appearing in photos on page 33, Vol.4 No.4 taken at Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation were spelled incorrectly. The proper spelling of those named are photo #5: (l to r) Gliza Mullen of AALUSC, Tracy Little, Collette Carter of AALUSC; photo #7: Nelcia Clarence, Kim Ford of AALUSC, Dulce Reyes of Las Buenas Amigas.

The Blackstripe, www.blackstripe.com your web address for information and news for and about same-gender-loving, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people of African descent. Features the Blacklist, a listing of notable sgl/lgbt people of African descent, www.blackstripe.com/blacklist.

Free Personals
Free Websites
Books
Flowers
Music
Gifts
Links
News

Make the Blackstripe your site for news and information about you!
www.blackstripe.com

THE BLACKSTRIPE www.blackstripe.com

Collective Voices

What do you call 300 dynamic black lesbians from around the country who come together for enriching dialogue and inspirational performances? CLOAVE, Collective Lesbians of African-Descent Voices Everywhere! In it's third year, the group has planned an exceptional event that is 'must' for sistahs attending Black Pride in Washington, D.C. in May. Invited panelists include Barbara Kigozi, Vidoegrapher & Photographer; Denise Bentley, Associate Director of Boston's Fenway clinic; Carlene Cheatum, Public Advocate for the D.C. Mayor's office; Nadine Smith, Founder and Executive Director of Equality Florida; Pastor Wanda Floyd, Founder and Pastor of Imani Temple, Dr. Andrea Sullivan, Naturopath and Homeopathic expert, and Charlene Cothran, Publisher of Venus Magazine.

Performances are scheduled by She-Black, a Canadian modern dance troupe; Dr. Kofi Adoma, violinist and activist; Kimberly Pernell, New York-based performance artist and entertainment editor for Venus Magazine; RAH, soul lyricist and an drumming group called AKWABA, bringing an Afri-Am-Native Drummawomyn vibe! Rebecca A. Helem, president and lead organizer is excited to present the event. "Energy is so running high that we predict our heaviest turn out ever." The event takes place on Saturday May 29, 1999 at 12:00 pm in Washington, DC at MCC 474 Ridge Street, NW during Black Pride weekend. For information call 202-544-9298.

Tyra Banks

TiTTY COMMITTEE

"The media and the general public seem obsessed with my breast. Are they real or are they fake? When ever I go to the GYN for a breast exam, I tell her, "I wish you could televise this so the whole world could see I'm all natural." I used to joke and laugh and say the rumors didn't bother me, but they really do hurt my feelings. No matter what I say, people will believe what they want to believe, and I've just got to learn to live with that."

Those candid words from Supermodel Tyra Banks, are excerpt from her new book Beauty Inside and Out. The leggy diva honestly discusses her beauty secrets and rituals about hair, skin, make-up, fitness, dating pitfalls, family issues and personal heath. In one chapter she shares her personal experiences about overcoming poor self-esteem as a 'super bony' pre-teen. Her addiction to junk food early in her modeling career once caused her to "almost faint on the runway. That's when I knew I had to change the way I ate." The triumph of her commitment to a healthy lifestyle is evidenced by her flawless appearance and overwhelming success. Beauty Inside and Out is hip, colorful, fun, and easy to read. It's great information for anyone but particularly makes the perfect gift for that young lady in your family who can't wait to be all grown-up.

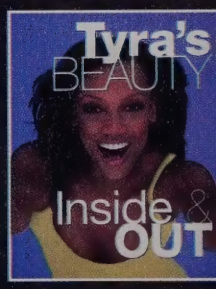


PHOTO BY TIISA PAUL

Empowerment
Black On Black Love
Self-Love
Community & Personal Affirmation
Celebrating Our Way Of Loving
In Dialogue
In Communion

TM *The SGL symbol

BWX

Black Womyn's Xchange

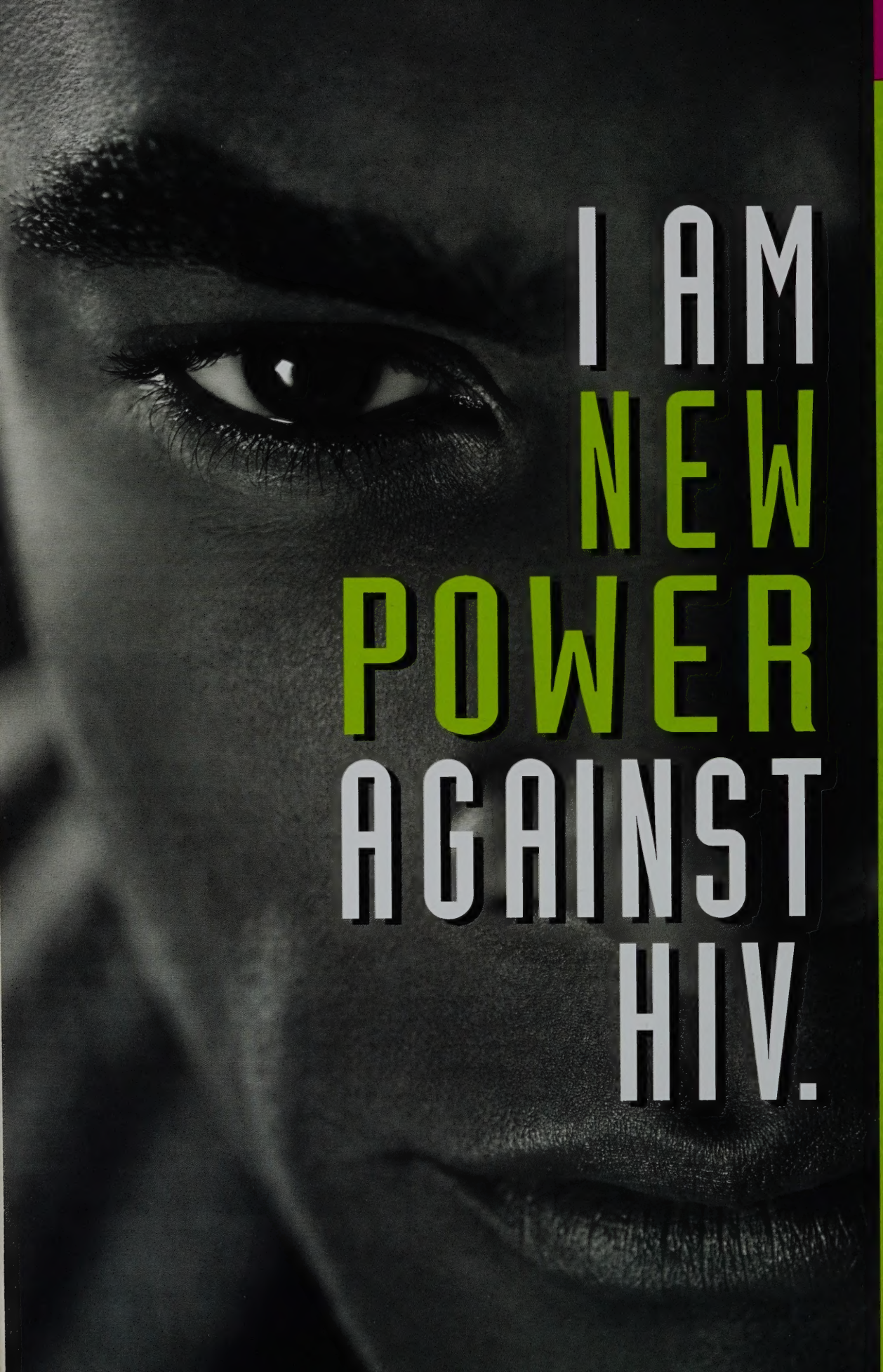
Black Same-Gender-Loving (SGL) Sistahs,
Loving Themselves In Their Own Image

BWX gathers weekly, 7:00 p.m. at the AMASSI Health, Wellness and
Cultural Affirmation Center in Los Angeles
For More Information Call 310.419.1969
Ask for Habiba

new for HIV

I AM HERE

GlaxoWellcome


I AM
NEW
POWER
AGAINST
HIV.

Talk to your healthcare professional about ZIAGEN. Or call 1-888-TALK-2-GW (1-888-825-5249).

I am new

Ziagen™

abacavir sulfate 300 mg tablets

I drive down viral load

Most people who took ZIAGEN with two other nucleoside analogues as their first combination regimen achieved undetectable viral load through 16 weeks.* ZIAGEN does not cure HIV infection/AIDS or prevent passing HIV to others. It's not known whether taking ZIAGEN will slow the progress of HIV disease or help you live longer.

I am two pills a day, with or without food

The easy dosing of ZIAGEN—just one tablet in the morning and one at night, with or without food—simplifies your combination therapy.

I give you new treatment options

ZIAGEN is powerful enough to achieve undetectable viral load when used in initial combination therapy*—for example, ZIAGEN + COMBIVIR® (lamivudine 150 mg/zidovudine 300 mg) Tablets—and may preserve future treatment options. ZIAGEN can be effective in patients who have used anti-HIV drugs before, but the effects are less.

Important safety information

About 5% of patients (5 in 100) who take ZIAGEN have a hypersensitivity reaction (a serious allergic reaction) that may result in death. IF YOU HAVE SKIN RASH OR TWO OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SETS OF SYMPTOMS, STOP TAKING ZIAGEN AND CALL YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY: fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain, severe tiredness, achiness, or generally ill feeling. A written list of these symptoms is on the Warning Card and Medication Guide provided by your pharmacist. You should carry the Warning Card with you.

If you must stop treatment with ZIAGEN because you have had this serious reaction, NEVER TAKE ZIAGEN AGAIN. If you take ZIAGEN again after you have had this serious reaction, WITHIN HOURS you may experience LIFE-THREATENING symptoms that may include LOWERING OF YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE OR DEATH.

A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with HIV drugs of this type.

Most side effects were mild to moderate; the most common side effects were nausea, vomiting, malaise or fatigue, headache, diarrhea, and loss of appetite. Most of these side effects did not cause people to stop taking ZIAGEN.

*71% (62/87) of patients taking ZIAGEN with lamivudine + zidovudine in this clinical trial had viral load undetectable below 400 copies/mL using the Roche Amplicor HIV-1 MONITOR® Test.

Please see important information for ZIAGEN and COMBIVIR on adjacent pages.

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Printed in USA. ABC042R0 March 1999

www.ZIAGEN.com

Glaxo Wellcome
HIV
A division of Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
Web site: www.glaxowellcome.com

MEDICATION GUIDE

ZIAGEN™ (z-EYE-uh-jen) (abacavir sulfate) Tablets and Oral Solution

Established name: abacavir (uh-BACK-ah-veer) sulfate tablets and oral solution

In order to take Ziagen safely, you should read all of the information in this Medication Guide each time you fill your prescription for Ziagen.

What is the most important information I should know about Ziagen?

About 5% of patients (5 in 100) who take Ziagen have a hypersensitivity reaction (a serious allergic reaction) **that may result in death.** If you have **skin rash** or two or more of the following sets of symptoms, you may be having this kind of reaction:

- **fever**
- **nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain**
- **severe tiredness, achiness, or generally ill feeling**

A written list of these symptoms is on the Warning Card provided by your pharmacist. You should carry this Warning Card with you. **IF YOU NOTICE THESE SYMPTOMS WHILE TAKING ZIAGEN, STOP TAKING ZIAGEN AND CALL YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY.**

If you must stop treatment with Ziagen because you have had this serious reaction, **NEVER TAKE ZIAGEN AGAIN**. If you take Ziagen again after you have had this serious reaction, **WITHIN HOURS** you may experience **LIFE-THREATENING** symptoms that may include **LOWERING OF YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE OR DEATH**.

Ziagen can have other serious side effects. Be sure to read "What are the possible side effects of Ziagen?" in the section to the right.

What is Ziagen?

Ziagen is a medication used to treat HIV infection. Ziagen is taken by mouth as a tablet or a strawberry-banana flavored liquid. It belongs to a class of anti-HIV medicines called nucleoside analogue reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs). Ziagen is only proven to work when taken in combination with other anti-HIV medications. When used in combination with these other medications, Ziagen helps lower the amount of HIV found in your blood and keep your immune system as healthy as possible so that it can help fight infection. However, Ziagen does not have these effects in all patients.

Ziagen does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. At this time, there is no evidence that Ziagen will help you live longer or have fewer of the medical problems that are associated with HIV infection or AIDS. Because of this, you must be sure to be seen regularly by your health care provider.

Who should not take Ziagen?

Do not take Ziagen if you have ever had a hypersensitivity reaction (a serious allergic reaction) to Ziagen. In such cases, you should return all of your unused Ziagen to your doctor or pharmacist for proper disposal.

How should I take Ziagen?

Take Ziagen exactly as your doctor prescribes it.

The usual dosage for adults (at least 16 years of age) is one 300-mg tablet twice a day.

Adolescents and children from 3 months to 16 years of age can also take Ziagen™ (abacavir sulfate) Tablets and Oral Solution. Your doctor will tell you if the oral solution or tablet is best for your child.

Also, your child's doctor will decide the right dose based on your child's weight and age. Ziagen has not been studied in children under 3 months of age.

Ziagen can be taken with food or on an empty stomach.

To help make sure that your anti-HIV therapy is as effective as it can be, be very careful to take all of your medication exactly as your doctor prescribed it and do not skip any doses.

If you miss a dose of Ziagen, take the missed dose immediately. Then, take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time.

When your supply of Ziagen and other anti-HIV drugs starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. It is very important that you take anti-HIV drugs as prescribed by your doctor because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if one or more of the drugs is stopped, even for a short time.

What should I avoid while taking Ziagen?

Ziagen has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Continue to practice safe sex while using Ziagen. Do not use or share dirty needles.

Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking Ziagen. Ziagen has not been studied in pregnant women and the risk to the unborn child is not known.

Mothers with HIV should not breastfeed their infants because HIV in the breast milk can be passed to the infant.

What are the possible or reasonably likely side effects of Ziagen?

Some people have had a hypersensitivity reaction (a serious allergic reaction) to Ziagen, which can be fatal. Instructions on how to recognize a possible reaction, as well as what to do if such a reaction is suspected, are discussed in the section "What is the most important information I should know about Ziagen?"

The class of medicines to which Ziagen belongs (NRTIs) can cause a condition called lactic acidosis, together with an enlarged liver. In some cases, this condition can be fatal. Women are more likely than men to experience this rare but serious side effect.

Ziagen can cause other side effects. In studies, the most common side effects with Ziagen were nausea, vomiting, malaise or fatigue, headache, diarrhea, and loss of appetite. Most of these side effects did not cause people to stop taking Ziagen. This listing of side effects is not complete. Your doctor or pharmacist can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects with Ziagen. Talk to your doctor promptly about any side effects you have.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Medication Guide. Ask a health care professional about any concerns about Ziagen. Professional labeling is available to your doctor and other health care professionals. If you want more information ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the professional labeling.

GlaxoWellcome

Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

December 1998 MG - 001

This Medication Guide has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

Patient Information about COMBIVIR® (lamivudine 150 mg/zidovudine 300 mg) Tablets

for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: lamivudine/zidovudine tablets

Please read this information before you start taking COMBIVIR (pronounced KOM-bĭ-veer). Staying informed will help you to work more closely with your doctor and healthcare team to determine what is best for you. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussion with your healthcare provider. You should remain under a doctor's care when using COMBIVIR and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your healthcare provider.

What is COMBIVIR?

COMBIVIR is the brand name of a tablet that combines EPIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine tablets) [3TC®] and RETROVIR® (zidovudine) Tablets [AZT], two drugs which are used to treat HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

How does COMBIVIR work?

COMBIVIR is a combination of lamivudine (la-MIV-u-deen) and zidovudine (zī-DOHV-u-deen), two medicines (nucleoside analogues) that slow down the replication of the HIV virus. This can reduce the virus' ability to infect new cells. It may help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Lamivudine plus zidovudine when used together can have stronger (synergistic) effects against the virus. COMBIVIR is a convenient way of taking lamivudine and zidovudine. COMBIVIR should usually be taken with other anti-HIV therapy.

Will COMBIVIR work the same as EPIVIR and RETROVIR taken together?

Yes, taking one COMBIVIR Tablet twice a day is the same as taking one EPIVIR 150 mg Tablet twice a day and either two RETROVIR 100 mg Capsules three times a day or one RETROVIR 300 mg Tablet twice a day.

How should I take COMBIVIR?

Take COMBIVIR as your doctor prescribes it. The recommended dose is one COMBIVIR Tablet orally two times a day, with or without food. To help make sure you will benefit from COMBIVIR, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays."

What should I do if I miss a dose of COMBIVIR?

If you miss a dose by more than 4 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. However, if you miss a dose by less than 4 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of COMBIVIR at any one time.

Does COMBIVIR cure HIV infection or AIDS?

No, there is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking COMBIVIR may still develop infections or other illnesses associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important to remain under the care of a healthcare provider. Use of lamivudine plus zidovudine has been shown to help patients with HIV infection stay healthy and live longer.

Does COMBIVIR reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

No, COMBIVIR, as well as other HIV medications, has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take COMBIVIR?

You should not take COMBIVIR if you have had a serious allergic reaction to either lamivudine or zidovudine.

Do not take COMBIVIR at the same time as EPIVIR or RETROVIR because they also contain lamivudine and zidovudine.

Individual dosing with EPIVIR plus RETROVIR, rather than COMBIVIR, should be considered for:

- A child under 12 years of age.
- A patient who weighs less than 110 pounds.
- Anyone who requires dosage adjustments due to drug side effects or poor kidney function.

What medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my healthcare provider?

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking COMBIVIR® (lamivudine 150 mg/zidovudine 300 mg) Tablets. Ask your doctor about enrolling you in the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry: 1-800-258-4263.
- You are breastfeeding. Mothers infected with HIV should not breastfeed their infants because HIV is present in breast milk.

Also talk to your doctor about:

- Problems with your blood counts.
- Problems with your muscles.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease, such as hepatitis.

Can COMBIVIR be taken with other medications?

Yes, COMBIVIR can be taken with most medications, including most anti-HIV drugs. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about all medications, over-the-counter or prescription, that you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of COMBIVIR?

Do not rely on this summary alone for information about side effects. Your healthcare provider can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects that may be relevant to you.

The safety of COMBIVIR is not expected to be different from the safety of EPIVIR and RETROVIR given separately.

In clinical studies of lamivudine plus zidovudine, side effects occurring in 5% or more of patients included: muscle and joint pain, headache, nausea, weakness and fatigue, nasal symptoms, cough, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, neuropathy, trouble sleeping, fever or chills, loss of appetite, dizziness, abdominal pain or cramps, depression, skin rashes, and indigestion.

It's important to know that serious side effects can occur with COMBIVIR, such as a decrease in red and white blood cells and muscle damage. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with some HIV drugs, including nucleoside analogues.

For HIV-infected individuals, periodic blood tests are recommended. If certain changes occur in your laboratory results while you are taking COMBIVIR, particularly if you become anemic or if your white blood cell count falls too low, your medication may need to be adjusted; your doctor may prescribe EPIVIR plus RETROVIR separately in place of COMBIVIR.

Tell your doctor promptly about any side effects or other unusual symptoms you may experience.

Other Information

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep COMBIVIR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Like most prescription drugs, lamivudine and zidovudine were required to be tested on animals before they were allowed for human use. In animal studies with doses much higher than those used in humans, zidovudine was associated with vaginal tumors. Your healthcare provider can tell you more about how drugs are tested on animals and what the results of these tests may mean about safety for you.

How should I store COMBIVIR Tablets?

COMBIVIR Tablets may be stored at room temperature and do not require refrigeration.

This provides a summary of information about COMBIVIR. If you have any questions or concerns about COMBIVIR or HIV, talk to your healthcare provider.

Glaxo Wellcome
HIV
A division of Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
Web site: www.glaxowellcome.com

Debra Cox

Canadian born, Debra Cox, gives it all she's got whenever she's in concert. The emotionally charged diva is the first Canadian R&B artist to ever reach #1 on Billboard's R&B charts. Cox's gospel-infused voice is second to none on her record-breaking single "Nobody's Supposed to be Here" from her album "One Wish" which stayed at #1 for 13 consecutive weeks.

PHOTO BY: ERIKA FOLTE

Edward Wilkerson

Fashion Designer & Photographer

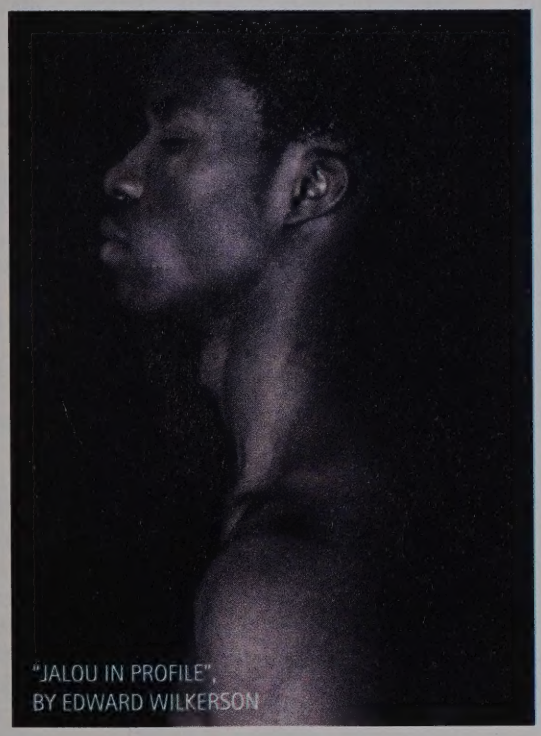
Edward Wilkerson is an artist who lives and breathes his work, literally.

From the classic yet stylized fashion to his provocative photography detailing facets of African life and artistry, Wilkerson has mesmerized anyone who has worn one of his designs or laid eyes upon his photography collections, Tribal Knowledge and Desire.

What began as a career in fashion has evolved into a life's journey for Wilkerson, a journey that would forever change the way he experienced life. In fact, Africa became the place where Edward would truly rediscover himself.

"Since Africa, my sense of color has not been the same after seeing how Mother Nature made grass such a lush color of green and the sensual blue in the sky," says a reminiscing Edward. "The air was so pure, it was a pleasure to breathe. I was so overwhelmed that I wanted to bottle it and bring it back home with me...instead, I have photographs." Welcome to Edward Wilkerson's journey to the visually beautiful.

Although the continent of Africa served as a sanctuary of rebirth for Edward, his formative years were spent in New York City. Influenced by his mother's immaculate sense of style, Edward decided at the age of ten that he wanted to become a fashion designer. While other children in his Queens neighborhood played outside, Edward surrounded himself with delicate and colorful fabrics, studied how clothing defined the body, and dreamed of one day designing couture clothing for some of the world's most stylish women.



"JALOU IN PROFILE", BY EDWARD WILKERSON

Edward graduated from Parsons School of Design and spent three years studying the art of fashion design. In1984, Edward was well on his way to a promising career as a designer with Anne Klein & Co. where he assisted then-senior designers Donna Karan and Louise del Olio. As the high-spending wave of the '80s came to an end and the age of the Supermodel progressed, Edward moved on to the chic design house of developing silhouettes and the direction of the main Calvin Klein collection.

After more than three years with Calvin Klein, it seemed that Edward Wilkerson's career had come full circle, and he accepted the position of designer with Donna Karan for the Donna Karan Collection, which would ultimately produce items that many women all over the world consider necessary pieces of clothing and accessories for their wardrobe. He was living his childhood dream.

While Edward continued to make headlines as senior designer at the Donna Karan Company, he began to feel a creative void. He had always been interested in photography and loved to travel. He soon found a way to combine his two favorite hobbies and in doing so, began to embrace a new career. In 1995, Edward vacationed in Kenya, East Africa and then two years later, traveled to Morocco, North Africa in 1997. Each of these trips inspired him to create an artistically beautiful melange of photographs that blend the body with striking artifacts such as African masks, clothing and jewelry. "In doing this, I am able to capture the very essence of the land's people, paying tribute to them because they have such a keen sense of style and a lot of creative license that is very unique to them," explains Wilkerson.

- Genita Ingram

"SINCE AFRICA, MY SENSE OF COLOR HAS NOT BEEN THE SAME AFTER SEEING HOW MOTHER NATURE MADE GRASS SUCH A LUSH COLOR OF GREEN AND THE SENSUAL BLUE IN THE SKY"

BY DON CHARLES

TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

I wish I could say it was always nice to hear gay people in the media, but if I said that, I'd be lying. Here's an example. Last Sunday, I tuned into my local Pacific radio station to catch an interview with a gay activist/journalist. His name really isn't important. One of the first questions the interviewer asked was why this particular activist indulged in the frequent use of the words "faggot" and "queer" in print.

His answer went something like this: "I LOVE to use those words with my gay friends. My straight friends, too. Even my brother calls me 'faggot!' It's all about reclaiming these words that have been used to hurt us over the years. I know there was some controversy within the gay community a few years back about using the words "queer" and "faggot," but that's all over now! We queer activists won that battle."

Say WHAT? I almost broke my leg lunging for my radio dial. I couldn't switch that joker off fast enough! The brazen arrogance of this man, to presume he could decide for me how I'm to be addressed.... To get on national radio airwaves and all but encourage people to slur me, to reduce me to a stereotype. I had no intention of letting this imitation of a journalist spoil my Sunday afternoon. But if you listen to or read gay media to any extent, you know how prevalent his kind of attitude has become. From comedian Scott Thompson belting out a chorus of "Faggots On Parade," to comic strips with names like "Dykes To Watch Out For," to endless chants of "We're here, we're queer, get used to it," you can hardly escape it.

Never mind the fundamentalists, honey...it's our own kind we have to worry about. There's nothing like a healthy dose of shared self-hatred to give you that heartwarming "community" kind of feeling. NOT!

If you're African American, you certainly don't have to wait for a white gay radical to make this language issue real for you. Ensconce yourself in almost any gathering of black people for a given length of time, and you won't fail to hear the "n" word come up in casual conversation.

"Nigga" this. "Nigga" that. "Nigga" so high and wide, you can't get over or around it. "Child, wasn't that a *fine* nigga?" Black comedians and rap artists embraced the word years ago, and if truth be told, they've done much to popularize its use -and not just among black people. If you find this usage offensive, as I do, it's almost enough to make you seek out all-white environments. Sure, white people use the "n" word, too...hell, they invented it ...but at least most of the time, they have the common courtesy not to use it within your earshot.

I ask myself why oppressed peoples become so fiercely attached to words that were created by others to denigrate and demean them. A lot of people seem to harbor this bogus belief that the use of slurs within oppressed groups amounts to nothing more than expressions of ENDEARMENT. I ain't hardly down with that logic! I'll never forget hearing the topic of racial slurs discussed on a national black call-in show a few years ago; the honesty of one female caller left a lasting impression on me. She stated that on those occasions when she felt compelled to call her husband a "nigga," she seldom—if ever—felt "endeared" to him! HELLO...

By the time I was thirteen years of age, I pretty much knew all the nasty words. And every one of those fun four-letter exclamations that you can't find in your dictionary have fallen from my lips at various times over the years. (Hey, I can be as politically incorrect as the next person!) However, there are a handful of racist and homophobic terms I've never been, and will never be, comfortable using. I won't say I don't slip up sometimes, but I do consciously avoid saying them. I can't forget that words like "nigga," "faggot," and "dyke" are stained with blood and tears.

A LOT OF PEOPLE SEEM TO HARBOR THIS BOGUS BELIEF THAT THE USE OF SLURS WITHIN OPPRESSED GROUPS AMOUNTS TO NOTHING MORE THAN EXPRESSIONS OF ENDEARMENT. I AIN'T HARDLY DOWN WITH THAT LOGIC!

These words robbed children of their innocence, and elders of their dignity. Not to mention those who were robbed of their livelihood, and often, their very lives. It bears remembering that the "n" word was ringing in the ears of Abner Louima as his rectum was being ripped apart by racist New York cops. And five will get you ten that "faggot" and "queer" were two of the last words the late Matthew Shepherd heard as his murderers were crucifying him on a Wyoming fence.

We can't "reclaim" these slurs! They were never ours to begin with.

They were imposed on us by wicked people who used us to further dishonorable social agendas. Shame on us, we who call ourselves the black and the gay communities, if we can't muster enough creativity to replace their slurs with words of our own invention; words that convey pride, love, and solidarity without a hint of self-hatred. How hard can it be?

Eric Benet

Live for today. Sounds like good advice, but for Eric Benet, today isn't enough. "I like the idea of making music that transcends time and history," says the soft-spoken artist. "Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole; people will be playing their records a hundred years from now. I hope to make music like that."

That might be a tall order for most young artists, but with Eric Benet, the smart money is on him to make it. For with A Day In The Life, his new Warner Bros. Records album, Eric instantly vaults to the front ranks of innovative singer/songwriters.

In the wake of his 1996 debut, True to Myself, Eric toured the world, making friends and fans wherever he went. When he returned home to Milwaukee last year, he set to work, writing scores of new songs and teaming up with a handful of equally talented writers and producers. "I didn't go into this thinking I had to do everything better," he says. Grounded in classic R & B, A Day In The Life was largely inspired by Eric's real life experience. "I keep a journal," he says. "The album title came from rereading passages in my diary. As a songwriter, I just opened myself up to whatever came out of my heart."

The wistful ballad "Come As You Are" is perhaps the emotional centerpiece of the album, while "Love the Hurt Away," which features the gospel-influenced organ mastery of Demonte Posey, reflects Eric's roots. "It's got that old ghetto-gospel-blues thing," he says. "We tried to channel Al Green, Bobby Bland, and Curtis Mayfield on that one." The same could be said for "Ghetto Girl," featuring Me'Shell Ndege Ocello, a song that reflects Eric's hometown pride. Given his burgeoning career, you'd think he would move to New York or L.A., but he prefers to remain grounded in Milwaukee. "When people hear I'm from Milwaukee, the first thing they say, after mentioning 'Happy Days' is, 'I didn't know there were any Black people there.' Well, this town has a strong African American community, and I was raised right in the middle of it."

Eric's debut album, True to Yourself, caught the public's attention in 1996, and since then Eric has toured the U.S. with Erykah Badu. With the release of A Day In The Life, Eric is revving up the touring machine once again for a busy 1999.

Cruzan in St. Croix

So, you've planned that especially romantic vacation with that special someone. Sounds like a fabulous idea, but this can be a somewhat complex task for same sex partners. Have you ever experienced any of the following? When checking into a hotel, have you ever received looks when your partner and you request a king-size bed? While having the romantic dinner of a lifetime in a fine restaurant with an ocean view, have you ever had this uncontrollable urge to kiss your lover passionately but feel like you can't? Or what about that walk along the beach—why not hold hands?

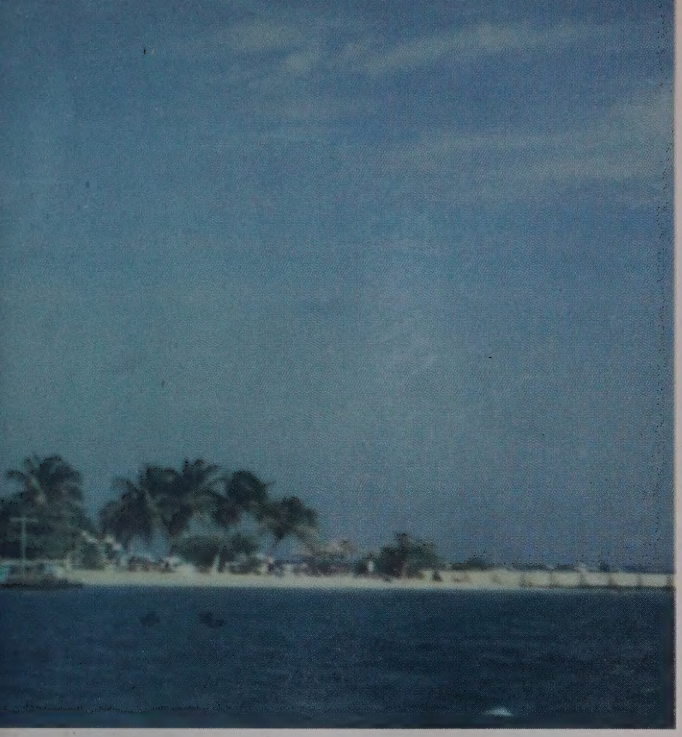
A lot of us have "lived on the edge" in these instances and have not given a second thought about being openly affectionate with our loved ones regardless of the sometimes dangerous circumstances. However, most of us tend to play it safe. Well, here's a suggestion: instead of vacationing in places with a predominately straight atmosphere, how about considering a paradise with something different—a destination that actually welcomes members of the gay and lesbian community. One such Caribbean island that has fostered a more "tolerant" attitude toward homosexuality is St. Croix.

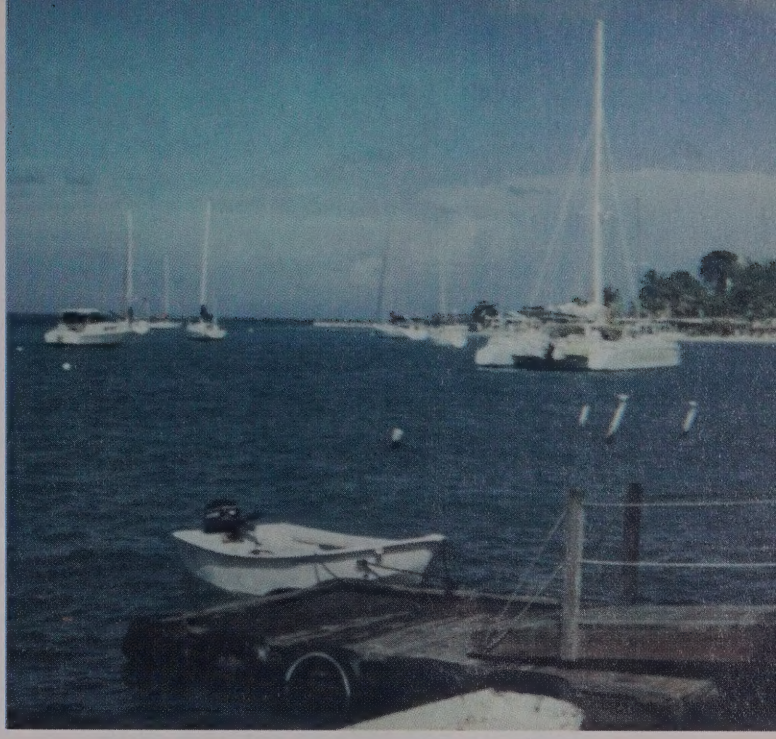
Initially, the island was inhabited by the Ciboney tribe by way of South America. Afterwards, the Tainos/Arawaks came, then the Caribs, around 1425. Columbus arrived in 1493, a year after his infamous appearance in the U.S. His visit sparked the first conflict between Natives and Europeans that actually resulted in fatalities on both sides, as his crew attacked the members of the tribe as they came to welcome them in their canoes. There is a National Park commemorating the visit by Columbus. At that time, the island was named "Santa Cruz" by Spain. Nearly two hundred years later, the island was eventually "settled" by both the English and Dutch.

For the next three hundred years, Spain, England, the Netherlands, and France (who obviously named the island St. Croix) were among the seven nations that ruled there. Lucrative profits were made from sugar production and cotton among other natural resources. Today, abandoned sugar mills and stately plantations remain as stark reminders of that time in history. Despite this significant period, St. Croix has retained its West Indian cultural heritage and beauty which gives us all reason to visit this magnificent tropical gem.

The largest of the United States Virgin Islands (second to St. Thomas, then St. John), St. Croix measures about 28 miles long and 7 miles wide of immaculate beaches, tropical rain forests, and desert vegetation. The average temperature is close to eighty degrees Fahrenheit, nearing ninety in the summer and rarely going below seventy in the winter. The population is in the vicinity of 100,000. The currency is the U.S. dollar and English is spoken here, along with a delicious Caribbean patois. As I mentioned before, St. Croix has a tolerant attitude about our presence, but don't expect rainbow flags waving everywhere and a pumping gay night life. The island is geared toward simply chillin'. Life is easygoing. Being gay is just matter-of-fact. The gay continentals (immigrants of European descent) co-exist with the native (the brothers and sisters) Cruzans, who, due to cultural reasons, are more closeted.

St. Croix is divided by two main

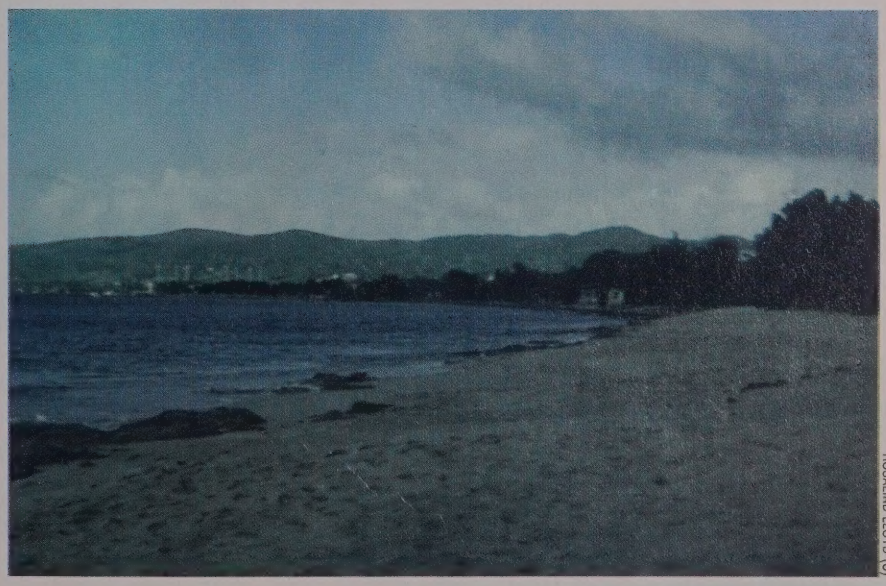




INSTEAD OF VACATIONING IN PLACES WITH A PREDOMINATELY STRAIGHT ATMOSPHERE, HOW ABOUT CONSIDERING A PARADISE WITH SOMETHING DIFFERENT—A DESTINATION THAT ACTUALLY WELCOMES MEMBERS OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY.

towns. Frediksted is known for its rain forests, botanical gardens, and the port where cruise ships dock. Christiansted is recognized for its attention to historical detail noted in its 18th century architecture, along with its array of hotels, shops and restaurants. For nature and water sports enthusiasts, I strongly suggest a trip to Buck Island. A national monument located just a short ride away from Christiansted, here is where I experienced some of the most exquisite snorkeling ever. Shortly after diving into the sea from the tour boat, we were greeted by a friendly manta ray in four feet of water!

There are many tours that offer decent snorkeling and scuba diving excursions, glass-bottom boat trips, nighttime cruises, parasailing and game fishing. For those not into the water sport thing, there is, of course, shopping, horseback riding along the beach, bike tours, tennis, golf—the list goes on. And there is, of course, my favorite thing to do: relaxing on the beach or by the pool, catching some rays while holding the hand of my boo at a resort that caters to the "family." The Cormorant Beach



ROSALIND LLOYD (3)

Club & Hotel is set on 12 acres, 3 miles west of Christensted. This lovely beachfront property boasts a prime snorkeling reef, a fresh-water pool, two tennis courts and an open air sea view lounge and restaurant. Arthur and Gregory, a committed couple of nineteen years, market their resort to Gay and Lesbian couples "who like to honeymoon every time they travel," but trust, singles or a bunch of friends can have a mad time there. It's a great place to socialize with gay and lesbian Cruzans.

So what are you waiting for? Make travel plans for that honeymoon right now! Request that king-size bed with your suite, and don't forget to tell them Ros sent ya!

by Rosalind Christine Lloyd

Drug holidays: One vacation you don't want to take

It sounds so good

Give your body a rest, a chance to recover from all those tough meds and their side effects. Just skip a dose, or a day, or a weekend...

The truth?

You're doing the virus a big favor. Suddenly, without your HIV drugs, there's nothing to stop the virus from making billions of copies of itself. And each and every new copy gives HIV a chance to change, to find a new form that could be resistant to the drugs you're taking.

In other words, when you go back to your regular medication schedule, there's a chance the drugs may no longer work as well.

HIV drugs should be taken on time, every day. That's the only way known to keep enough of each drug in your blood at all times to fight HIV.

The bottom line:

Why help the virus hurt you? Next time you're tempted to skip a dose or two, think again...or else a "minor" drug holiday could end up being a serious threat to your health. Don't let your vacation put HIV back to work.

Call 1-800 760-5912

Be Smart!

For more information on drug holidays and other helpful information on managing HIV

call 1-800-760-5912
or see www.treathiv.com

PROVEN POWER for HIV

Simplify your combination therapy

Combivir can make it easier for you to stay on your medication schedule

- *Two proven HIV therapies are in one tablet*
- *One Combivir Tablet morning and night, with or without food*
- *Helps you live a longer, healthier life[1,2]*

The safety profile of Combivir should be the same as that of Epivir® (lamivudine; 3TC®) + Retrovir® (zidovudine; AZT). The most frequent side effects associated with Epivir + Retrovir taken together are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with some HIV drugs, including AZT and 3TC.

Ask your healthcare professional about

Combivir®

lamivudine 150 mg/zidovudine 300 mg

ONE TABLET TWICE A DAY

Smarter Together

Call 1•800•760•5912 for more information or see www.treathiv.com

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Glaxo Wellcome HIV
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Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
Web site: www.glaxowellcome.com

Please see brief summary for Combivir on adjacent page.

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BRIEF SUMMARY

COMBIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine/zidovudine tablets)

The following is a brief summary only; see full prescribing information for complete product information.

WARNING: ZIDOVUDINE, ONE OF THE TWO ACTIVE INGREDIENTS IN COMBIVIR, HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH HEMATOLOGIC TOXICITY INCLUDING NEUTROPENIA AND SEVERE ANEMIA, PARTICULARLY IN PATIENTS WITH ADVANCED HIV DISEASE (SEE WARNINGS). PROLONGED USE OF ZIDOVUDINE HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH SYMPTOMATIC MYOPATHY.

LACTIC ACIDOSIS AND SEVERE HEPATOMEGALY WITH STEATOSIS, INCLUDING FATAL CASES, HAVE BEEN REPORTED WITH THE USE OF ANTIRETROVIRAL NUCLEOSIDE ANALOGUES ALONE OR IN COMBINATION, INCLUDING ZIDOVUDINE AND LAMIVUDINE (SEE WARNINGS).

INDICATIONS AND USAGE: COMBIVIR is indicated for the treatment of HIV infection.

Description of Clinical Studies: ***COMBIVIR:*** There have been no clinical trials conducted with COMBIVIR. See CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY for information about bioequivalence. One COMBIVIR Tablet given twice a day is an alternative regimen to EPIVIR Tablets 150 mg twice a day plus RETROVIR 600 mg per day in divided doses.

Lamivudine Plus Zidovudine: The NUCB3007 (CAESAR) study was conducted using EPIVIR 150-mg Tablets (150 mg b.i.d.) and RETROVIR 100-mg Capsules (2 x 100 mg t.i.d.). CAESAR was a multicenter, double-blind, placebo-controlled study comparing continued current therapy [zidovudine alone (62% of patients) or zidovudine with didanosine or zalcitabine (38% of patients)] to the addition of EPIVIR or EPIVIR plus an investigational non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor, randomized 1:2:1. A total of 1816 HIV-infected adults with 25 to 250 (median 122) CD4 cells/mm^3 at baseline were enrolled: median age was 36 years, 87% were male, 84% were nucleoside-experienced, and 16% were therapy-naive. The median duration on study was 12 months. Results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of Patients (%) With At Least One HIV Disease-Progression Event or Death

Endpoint	Current Therapy (n = 460)	EPIVIR plus Current Therapy (n = 896)	EPIVIR plus a NNRTI* plus Current Therapy (n = 460)
HIV progression or death	90 (19.6%)	86 (9.6%)	41 (8.9%)
Death	27 (5.9%)	23 (2.6%)	14 (3.0%)

*An investigational non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor not approved in the United States.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: COMBIVIR Tablets are contraindicated in patients with previously demonstrated clinically significant hypersensitivity to any of the components of the product.

WARNINGS: COMBIVIR is a fixed-dose combination of lamivudine and zidovudine. Ordinarily, COMBIVIR should not be administered concomitantly with either lamivudine or zidovudine.

The complete prescribing information for all agents being considered for use with COMBIVIR should be consulted before combination therapy with COMBIVIR is initiated.

Bone Marrow Suppression: COMBIVIR should be used with caution in patients who have bone marrow compromise evidenced by granulocyte count <1000 cells/mm^3 or hemoglobin <9.5 g/dL (see ADVERSE REACTIONS).

Frequent blood counts are strongly recommended in patients with advanced HIV disease who are treated with COMBIVIR. For HIV-infected individuals and patients with asymptomatic or early HIV disease, periodic blood counts are recommended.

Lactic Acidosis/Severe Hepatomegaly with Steatosis: Lactic acidosis and severe hepatomegaly with steatosis, including fatal cases, have been reported with the use of antiretroviral nucleoside analogues alone or in combination, including zidovudine and lamivudine. A majority of these cases have been in women. Caution should be exercised when administering COMBIVIR to any patient, and particularly to those with known risk factors for liver disease. Treatment with COMBIVIR should be suspended in any patient who develops clinical or laboratory findings suggestive of lactic acidosis or hepatotoxicity.

Myopathy: Myopathy and myositis, with pathological changes similar to that produced by HIV disease, have been associated with prolonged use of zidovudine, and therefore may occur with therapy with COMBIVIR.

PRECAUTIONS:

General: Reduction of doses of lamivudine is recommended for patients with low body weight (less than 50 kg or 110 lb); therefore patients with low body weight should not receive COMBIVIR.

Patients With HIV and Hepatitis B Virus Coinfection: In clinical trials and postmarketing experience, some patients with HIV infection who have chronic liver disease due to hepatitis B virus infection experienced clinical or laboratory evidence of recurrent hepatitis upon discontinuation of lamivudine. Consequences may be more severe in patients with decompensated liver disease.

Patients With Impaired Renal Function: Reduction of the dosages of lamivudine and zidovudine is recommended for patients with impaired renal function. Patients with creatinine clearance ≤50 mL/min should not receive COMBIVIR.

Information for Patients: COMBIVIR is not a cure for HIV infection and patients may continue to experience illnesses associated with HIV infection, including opportunistic infections. Patients should be advised that the use of COMBIVIR has not been shown to reduce the risk of transmission of HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Patients should be informed that the major toxicities of COMBIVIR are neutropenia and/or anemia. They should be told of the extreme importance of having their blood counts followed closely while on therapy, especially for patients with advanced HIV disease. Patients should be advised of the importance of taking COMBIVIR as it is prescribed.

Drug Interactions: Coadministration of ganciclovir, interferon-alpha, and other bone marrow suppressive or cytotoxic agents may increase the hematologic toxicity of zidovudine (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY section of full prescribing information).

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, and Impairment of Fertility: ***Carcinogenicity:***

Lamivudine: Lamivudine long-term carcinogenicity studies in mice and rats showed no evidence of carcinogenic potential at exposures up to 10 times (mice) and 58 times (rats) those observed in humans at the recommended therapeutic dose.

Zidovudine: Zidovudine was administered orally at three dosage levels to separate groups of mice and rats (60 females and 60 males in each group). Initial single daily doses were 30, 60, and 120 mg/kg per day in mice and 80, 220, and 600 mg/kg per day in rats. The doses in mice were reduced to 20, 30, and 40 mg/kg per day after day 90 because of treatment-related anemia, whereas in rats only the high dose was reduced to 450 mg/kg per day on day 91 and then to 300 mg/kg per day on day 279.

In mice, seven late-appearing (after 19 months) vaginal neoplasms (five nonmetastasizing squamous cell carcinomas, one squamous cell papilloma, and one squamous polyp) occurred in animals given the highest dose. One late-appearing squamous cell papilloma occurred in the vagina of a middle-dose animal. No vaginal tumors were found at the lowest dose.

In rats, two late-appearing (after 20 months), nonmetastasizing vaginal squamous cell carcinomas occurred in animals given the highest dose. No vaginal tumors occurred at the low or middle dose in rats. No other drug-related tumors were observed in either sex of either species.

At doses that produced tumors in mice and rats, the estimated drug exposure (as measured by AUC) was approximately three times (mouse) and 24 times (rat) the estimated human exposure at the recommended therapeutic dose of 100 mg every 4 hours.

Two transplacental carcinogenicity studies were conducted in mice. One study administered zidovudine at doses of 20 mg/kg per day or 40 mg/kg per day from gestation day 10 through parturition and lactation with dosing continuing in offspring for 24 months postnatally. The doses of zidovudine employed in this study produced zidovudine exposures approximately three times the estimated human exposure at recommended doses. After 24 months, at the highest dose, an increase in incidence of vaginal tumors was noted with no increase in tumors in the liver or lung or any other organ in either gender. These findings are consistent with results of the standard oral carcinogenicity study in mice, as described earlier. A second study administered zidovudine at maximum tolerated doses of 12.5 mg/day or 25 mg/day (~1000 mg/kg nonpregnant body weight or ~450 mg/kg of term body weight) to pregnant mice from days 12 through 18 of gestation. There was an increase in the number of tumors in the lung, liver, and female reproductive tracts in the offspring of mice receiving the higher dose level of zidovudine.

It is not known how predictive the results of rodent carcinogenicity studies may be for humans.

Mutagenicity: Lamivudine: Lamivudine was negative in a microbial mutagenicity screen, in an in vitro cell transformation assay, in a rat micronucleus test, in a rat bone marrow cytogenetic assay, and in an assay for unscheduled DNA synthesis in rat liver. It was mutagenic in a L5178Y/TK$^{+/-}$ mouse lymphoma assay and clastogenic in a cytogenetic assay using cultured human lymphocytes.

Zidovudine: Zidovudine was mutagenic in a L5178Y/TK$^{+/-}$ mouse lymphoma assay, positive in an in vitro cell transformation assay, clastogenic in a cytogenetic assay using cultured human lymphocytes, and positive in mouse and rat micronucleus tests after repeated doses. It was negative in a cytogenetic study in rats given a single dose.

Impairment of Fertility: Lamivudine: In a study of reproductive performance, lamivudine, administered to male and female rats at doses up to 130 times the usual adult dose based on body surface area considerations, revealed no evidence of impaired fertility (judged by conception rates) and no effect on the survival, growth, and development to weaning of the offspring.

Zidovudine: Zidovudine, administered to male and female rats at doses up to 7 times the usual adult dose based on body surface area considerations, had no effect on fertility judged by conception rates.

Pregnancy: Pregnancy Category C.

COMBIVIR: There are no adequate and well-controlled studies of COMBIVIR in pregnant women. Reproduction studies with lamivudine and zidovudine have been performed in animals (see Lamivudine and Zidovudine sections below). COMBIVIR should be used during pregnancy only if the potential benefits outweigh the risks.

Lamivudine: Reproduction studies with orally administered lamivudine have been performed in rats and rabbits at 130 and 60 times, respectively, the usual adult dose (based on relative body surface area) and have revealed no evidence of teratogenicity. Some evidence of early embryolethality was seen in the rabbit at doses similar to those produced by the usual adult dose and higher, but there was no indication of this effect in the rat at orally administered doses up to 130 times the usual adult dose. Studies in pregnant rats and rabbits showed that lamivudine is transferred to the fetus through the placenta.

Zidovudine: Reproduction studies with orally administered zidovudine in the rat and in the rabbit at doses up to 500 mg/kg per day revealed no evidence of teratogenicity with zidovudine. Zidovudine treatment resulted in embryo/fetal toxicity as evidenced by an increase in the incidence of fetal resorptions in rats given 150 or 450 mg/kg per day and rabbits given 500 mg/kg per day. The doses used in the teratology studies resulted in peak zidovudine plasma concentrations (after one-half of the daily dose) in rats 66 to 226 times, and in rabbits 12 to 87 times, mean steady-state peak human plasma concentrations (after one-sixth of the daily dose) achieved with the recommended daily dose (100 mg every 4 hours). In an additional teratology study in rats, a dose of 3000 mg/kg per day (very near the oral median lethal dose in rats of 3683 mg/kg) caused marked maternal toxicity and an increase in the incidence of fetal malformations. This dose resulted in peak zidovudine plasma concentrations 350 times peak human plasma concentrations. No evidence of teratogenicity was seen in this experiment at doses of 600 mg/kg per day or less. Two rodent carcinogenicity studies were conducted (see Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility).

Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry: To monitor maternal-fetal outcomes of pregnant women exposed to COMBIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine/zidovudine tablets) and other antiretroviral agents, an Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry has been established. Physicians are encouraged to register patients by calling 1-800-258-4263.

Nursing Mothers: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that HIV-infected mothers not breastfeed their infants to avoid risking postnatal transmission of HIV infection.

COMBIVIR: Zidovudine is excreted in breast milk (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: Pharmacokinetics: Nursing Mothers subsection of full prescribing information); however, no data are available on COMBIVIR or lamivudine. Therefore, there is a potential for adverse effects in nursing infants. **Mothers should be instructed not to breastfeed if they are receiving COMBIVIR.**

Pediatric Use: COMBIVIR should not be administered to pediatric patients less than 12 years of age because it is a fixed-dose combination that cannot be adjusted for this patient population.

ADVERSE REACTIONS:

Lamivudine Plus Zidovudine Administered As Separate Formulations: In four randomized, controlled trials of EPIVIR 300 mg per day plus RETROVIR 600 mg per day, the following selected clinical and laboratory adverse events were observed (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2: Selected Clinical Adverse Events (≥5% Frequency) in Four Controlled Clinical Trials With EPIVIR 300 mg/day and RETROVIR 600 mg/day

Adverse Event		EPIVIR plus RETROVIR (n = 251)
Body as a whole	Headache	35%
	Malaise & fatigue	27%
	Fever or chills	10%
Digestive	Nausea	33%
	Diarrhea	18%
	Nausea & vomiting	13%
	Anorexia and/or decreased appetite	10%
	Abdominal pain	9%
	Abdominal cramps	6%
	Dyspepsia	5%
Nervous system	Neuropathy	12%
	Insomnia & other sleep disorders	11%
	Dizziness	10%
	Depressive disorders	9%
Respiratory	Nasal signs & symptoms	20%
	Cough	18%
Skin	Skin rashes	9%
Musculoskeletal	Musculoskeletal pain	12%
	Myalgia	8%
	Arthralgia	5%

Pancreatitis was observed in three of the 656 adult patients (<0.5%) who received EPIVIR in controlled clinical trials. Selected laboratory abnormalities observed during therapy are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequencies of Selected Laboratory Abnormalities Among Adults in Four Controlled Clinical Trials of EPIVIR 300 mg/day plus RETROVIR 600 mg/day*

Test (Abnormal Level)	EPIVIR plus RETROVIR % (n)
Neutropenia (ANC<750/mm^3)	7.2% (237)
Anemia (Hgb<8.0 g/dL)	2.9% (241)
Thrombocytopenia (platelets<50,000/mm^3)	0.4% (240)
ALT (>5.0 x ULN)	3.7% (241)
AST (>5.0 x ULN)	1.7% (241)
Bilirubin (>2.5 x ULN)	0.8% (241)
Amylase (>2.0 x ULN)	4.2% (72)

ULN = Upper limit of normal.
ANC = Absolute neutrophil count.
n = Number of patients assessed.
*Frequencies of these laboratory abnormalities were higher in patients with mild laboratory abnormalities at baseline.

Observed During Clinical Practice: In addition to adverse events reported from clinical trials, the following events have been identified during post-approval use of EPIVIR and/or RETROVIR. Because they are reported voluntarily from a population of unknown size, estimates of frequency cannot be made. These events have been chosen for inclusion due to a combination of their seriousness, frequency of reporting, or potential causal connection to EPIVIR and/or RETROVIR.

Endocrine and Metabolic: Hyperglycemia.

General: Sensitization reactions (including anaphylaxis), vasculitis.

Hepatobiliary Tract and Pancreas: Lactic acidosis and hepatic steatosis (see WARNINGS), pancreatitis.

Musculoskeletal: Muscle weakness with CPK elevation, rhabdomyolysis.

Nervous: Seizures.

Skin: Alopecia, erythema multiforme, Stevens-Johnson syndrome, urticaria.

OVERDOSAGE:

COMBIVIR: There is no known antidote for COMBIVIR.

Lamivudine: One case of an adult ingesting 6 grams of lamivudine was reported; there were no clinical signs or symptoms noted and hematologic tests remained normal. It is not known whether lamivudine can be removed by peritoneal dialysis or hemodialysis.

Zidovudine: Acute overdoses of zidovudine have been reported in pediatric patients and adults. These involved exposures up to 50 grams. The only consistent findings were nausea and vomiting. Other reported occurrences included headache, dizziness, drowsiness, lethargy, confusion, and one report of a grand mal seizure. Hematologic changes were transient. All patients recovered. Hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis appear to have a negligible effect on the removal of zidovudine while elimination of its primary metabolite, GZDV, is enhanced.

DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION: The recommended oral dose of COMBIVIR for adults and adolescents (at least 12 years of age) is one tablet (containing 150 mg of lamivudine and 300 mg of zidovudine) twice daily.

Dose Adjustment: Because it is a fixed-dose combination, COMBIVIR should not be prescribed for patients requiring dosage adjustment such as those with reduced renal function (creatinine clearance ≤50 mL/min), those with low body weight (<50 kg or 110 lb), or those experiencing dose-limiting adverse events.

US Patent Nos. 5,047,407; 4,818,538; 4,828,838; 4,724,232; 4,833,130; and 4,837,208

GlaxoWellcome

Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Lamivudine is manufactured under agreement from Biochem Pharma Inc.
Laval, Quebec, Canada

May 1998/RL-589

1st Annual Black Pride

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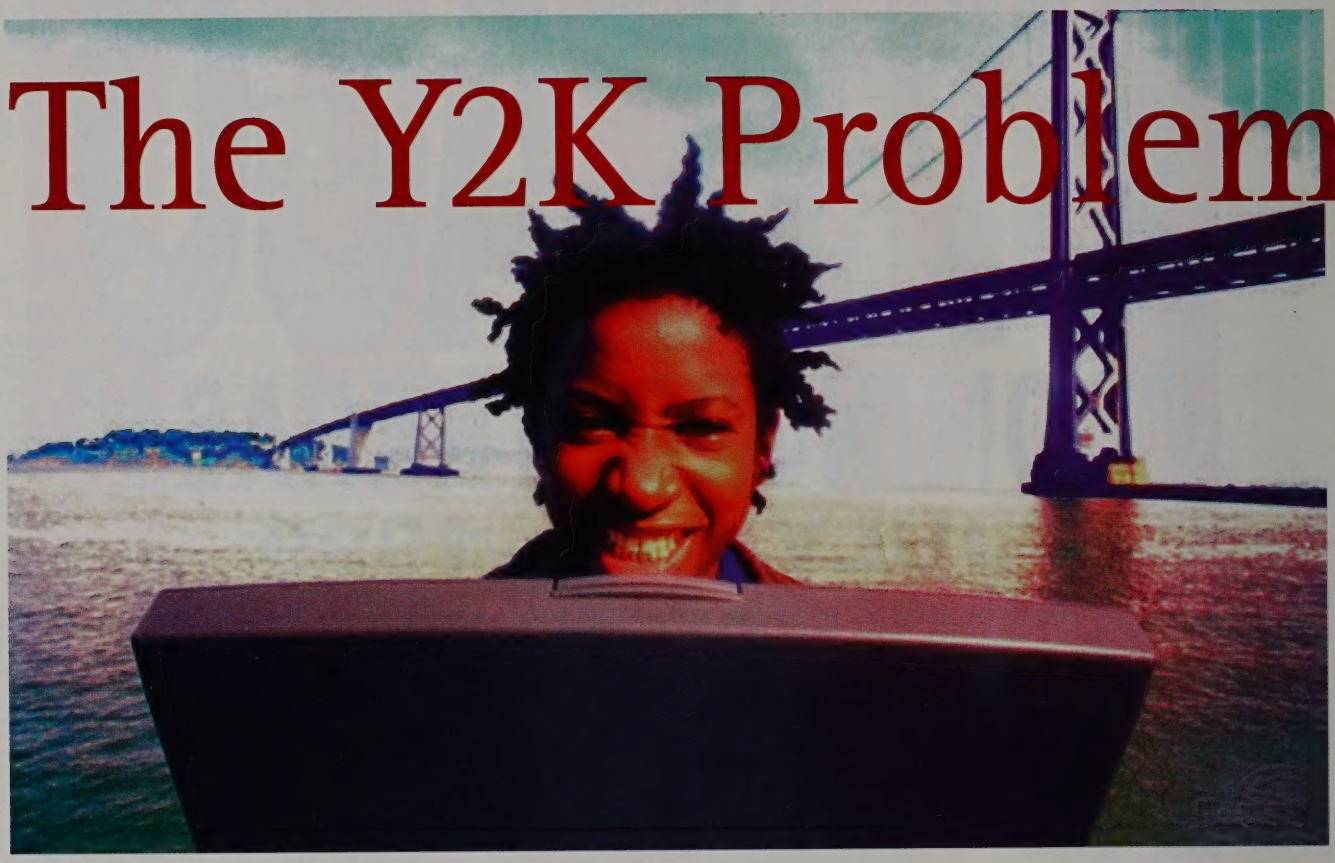
COMING SOON

The Y2K Problem



Throughout history, technology has brought both unexpected benefits and costs. The latest in a long line of snafus is the Year 2000 problem, often abbreviated as Y2K.

Simply put, many computer programmers in the past didn't expect the machines they were programming to still be in use today, so they permitted years to have only two digits. This shortsightedness will cause many programs to misread January 1, 2000, as January 1, 1900, which is expected to lead to widespread computer malfunctions and even crashes.

You would think that correcting Y2K would be easy. One thorny obstacle is finding the millions of tiny microprocessors embedded unobtrusively in the equipment of power plants and similar systems used by other industries. Another is having to manually sift through billions of lines of mainframe computer code—the intricacies makes automation impossible.

Personal computers are not immune. Inexcusably, many newer programs and computers were programmed without regard for the next millennium.

You've probably read some of the gloom-and-doom prophesies about the consequences of all this. The worst of the alarmists are predicting the collapse of industries ranging from electric power and telecommunications to banking and transportation, and they're planning to head for the hills to avoid the food shortages, bank closures, and riots that they expect will follow.

At the other extreme, others are pooh-poohing all the hullabaloo, confident that the experts will take care of matters.

Nobody knows for sure what's going to happen. But the best analysts are saying that we'll likely experience at least some disruptions, individually or collectively, and that some of these will be serious.

Fortunately, you can take steps to prepare for the problems you can't solve. And if you have a PC, you can take other steps to solve problems that may affect it.

Personal computer problems, though not hassle-free, are easiest to fix.

First, check with whomever you bought your computer to see if it's Y2K-compliant. Most newer models are, but even PCs a couple of years old may need an upgrade to their BIOS, which is a chip that includes instructions for handling dates and other operations.

Upgrading a BIOS can involve popping out the old chip and inserting a new one or downloading software over the Internet and "flashing" your old BIOS with updated code. You need to be careful here—a misstep can render your PC inoperable. Even though I followed instructions, flashing the BIOS of my 2 1/2-year-old Pentium 166 caused its sound to malfunction, which required a phone call to the manufacturer to fix.

You can alternately test your PC to

and You

see if it's Y2K-compliant. A number of Web sites provide access to free software for this purpose along with background information, including PC Magazine's at http://www.pcmag.com/y2k and CNET's at http://www.cnet.com/Content/Reports/Special/Y2K.

Software programs may also have problems when the new century rolls around. The most foolproof solution is to simply upgrade to the latest version of any mission-critical programs you use. Alternately, you can check with the software developer to see whether the version you're using is Y2K-compliant and, if not, whether a fix is available.

If you have a Macintosh computer, you have less to worry about, since the Mac and most Mac programs will handle the transition with ease.

Apple's Y2K site is at http://www.apple.com/macos/info/2000.html.

Some Y2K issues are entirely your own doing. Whether you're PC or Mac-based, if you've used two digits for date entries in spreadsheet, database, or accounting programs, and you plan to use the same files beyond 1999, you should convert the dates to four digits or look into other remedies.

Y2K issues involving custom computer programs can be a more difficult fix, and you or your organization should already have begun the process of identifying and fixing problems. This task can be so formidable that some organizations are replacing entire systems with newer ones.

The Y2K consequences beyond your control, if they occur at all, will likely be temporary. Still, short of becoming a survivalist, it makes sense to prepare for them. In case your bank's ATMs don't work correctly on January 1, 2000, have a little extra cash on hand. In the event of a food distribution foul-up, consider stocking up on a few canned goods during the week before.

Finally, since we'll be at the mercy of winter's throes, and since utility companies with all of their embedded processors may be most vulnerable to Y2K, have a contingency plan ready if you wake up in the middle of the night shivering.

Reid Goldsborough is a syndicated columnist and author of Straight Talk About the Information Superhighway.

IBM Gay and Lesbian Business Forum

For the first time ever, a group of Latin and African American gays and lesbians representing organizations and businesses from around the country met in Washington, D.C. at the IBM Gay and Lesbian Business Forum. The event was hosted by Venus magazine and National Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Organization, LLEGO. IBM sponsored the meeting and the company's Community Affairs Director, Leslie Smith, was the keynote speaker.

The group was welcomed by LLEGO Executive Director Martin Ornelas-Quintero (Pictured, top). The goals of the meeting were threefold: to give minority businesses within the gay and lesbian community an opportunity to develop a partnership with IBM; to network and exchange ideas about how to build better business relationships within minority communities across cultural lines; and to discuss Year 2000 problems and solutions.

IBM was cautioned by Clara Pizana of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, Inc. about the need for the company to spend more money in Latin and African American communities before expecting the communities to commit to business relationships. The group was reminded that big business spends money in areas where demographic studies show there are responsive communities in need of their products and services. "Although I KNOW you're out there, I've been told that you folks [black and Latino gays and lesbians] are not even here," says Smith.

"It isn't that we are NOT here, it's that we have not been willing to stand up and say that we ARE here," returned Charlene Cothran, publisher of Venus magazine, who further expressed an urgent need for a demographic study of minority gay and lesbian communities. "When white gays wanted to be taken seriously by big business, they pooled their resources and paid to have a market study produced. Those numbers are now used in commercial industry as the standard for the whole gay and lesbian community but very few of the respondents to the surveys were people of color," says Cothran.

James Homer of Atlanta, who sits on the boards of several BLGT organizations asked, "So how, then, do we go about building relationships with major corporations?"

"By putting your money where your mouth is," answered Cornelius Wilson of Men of Color, Inc., of Detroit. Pending budget approval, Wilson is planning to purchase several new computers from IBM through the Venus magazine website where the company has offered several discounts on new products. "IBM recognizes that we exist and this is one way to show the company that we ARE here. Sure I can get the same computers somewhere else, but by making this type of purchase, my organization makes a statement about it's identity, and it's economic strength, all with one swipe of a credit card."

stylewise

New York fashion designer Barron Wise presents classic looks from his signature collection. The seasoned designer, who ran a 7th Avenue apparel shop earlier in his career now concentrates on private clients and menswear. "Don't call it a comeback," he says from his Harlem showroom, "I've been here for years and my collections are stronger than they've ever been." He also designs wedding gowns, prom dresses, and summer apparel for men. Call 212-690-2167 for an appointment.

Barron Wise on the runway at one of his shows.

Pumpkin Deep V-neck matte jersey dress

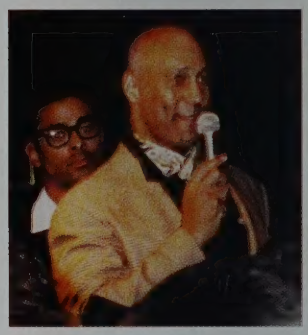
ALL PHOTOS COURTESY BARRON WISE

The Big Red Dress.
top: silk broadcloth
with silk tafetta trim.
skirt: red silk tafetta
with silk satin trim.

Periwinkle silk
chiffon and silk
satin winged dress.

Men of Color

Fall Fashion Week in New York brought out some of the city's Finest black male models including these gentlemen who dazzled a packed house at Café Soul Restaurant in Manhattan. The event marked the release of 'Men of Color' by Lloyd Boston. The book celebrates the history of Black male models.



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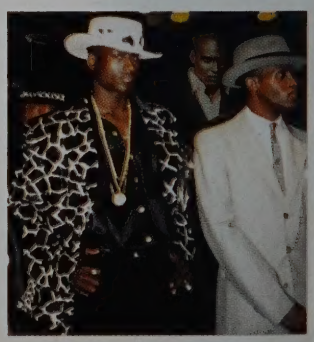
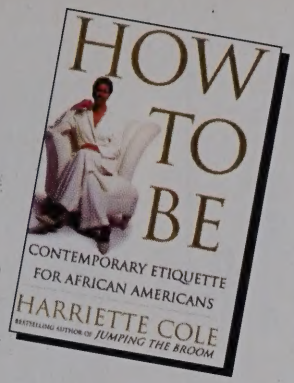




Harriette Cole, author of *'How to Be: Contemporary Etiquette for African-Americans'* and Llyod Boston, author of *'Men of Color'*.

Reknown make-up artist, Reggie Wells, second from right, and other guest were in attendance.

How to Be

Harriette Cole, best selling author of 'Jumping the Broom' launched her new book *'How To Be: Contemporary Etiquette for African-Americans'*, [Simon and Schuster, 1999 ISBN:0-684-82645-3] with a totally fabulous Manhattan party during Fall Fashion week. In the book, you'll find everything you need to know about how to honor your heritage; how to entertain one or a hundred; how to handle workplace issues; how to deal with family occasions from weddings to funerals and much, much more.

The book also addresses homophobia in black culture and offers suggestions on how the Black family might reevaluate the way they think of their gay brothers and sisters. "One gay man in a focus group said to me later that he didn't contribute fully because he knew that he would be made to feel unwelcome," she said during an interview from her Manhattan office. This encounter encouraged her to include research information on how in some traditional African societies, gays and lesbians are considered 'gatekeepers' and keepers of peace among the communities.

'How to Be' incredibly includes a 'how to' chapter for same-sex union ceremonies. Another chapter on dating includes same-sex relationships. Here she reveals what black gays have shared in focus groups around the country.

Things like why we're still searching for meaningful relationships in the bars. "Another gay man shared that because of social discomfort experienced by black gay men, it is hard to build wholesome relationships because they feel forced to go to clubs where no one can find a meaningful partner," she said.

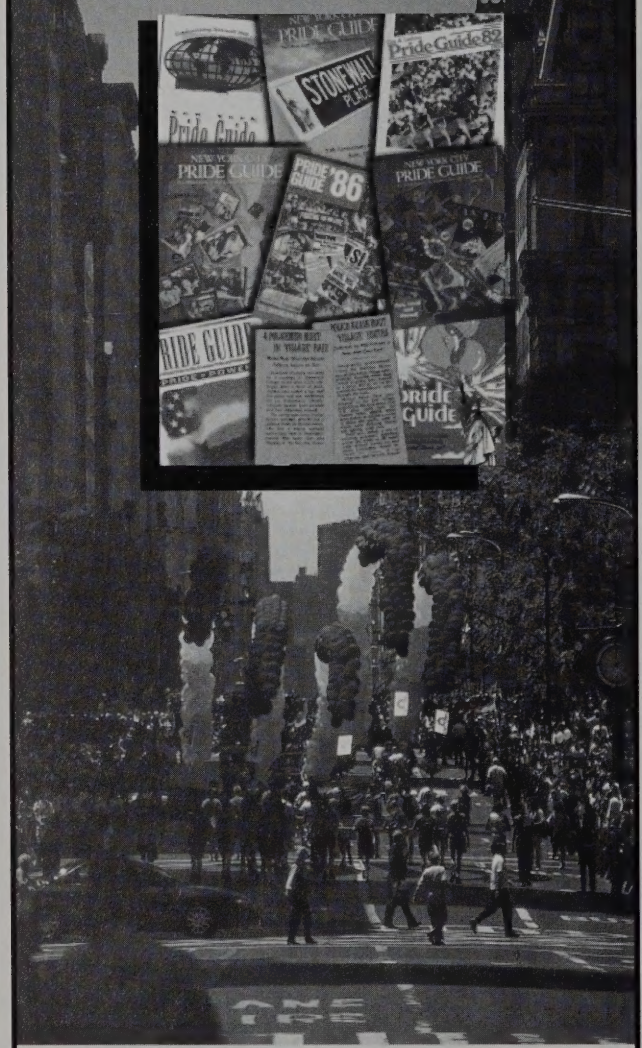
The Founder and CEO of Profundities, Inc., and former fashion editor for *Essence* Magazine, Ms. Cole seemed eager to point out that she hopes her new book will help create "positive meaningful dialogue" within the black family. "When it comes to our gay brothers and sisters, most Black folks become focused on their SEXuality rather than their PERSONality. I hope my book will inspire people to look inside their own life, to have respect for the many differences of our people and to recognize that we all have gifts to offer."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIMBERLY PURNELL

Harritte Cole and *Black Enterprise* Magazine publisher, Earl Graves at a Manhattan book release party for *'How to Be'*.

NEW YORK
Pride Guide
THE OFFICIAL EVENTS GUIDE

Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of Stonewall



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Left to Right - Brian Hayes Copeland, Healing Art Committee Member; Pernessa Seele, Founder/CEO of The Balm In Gilead; Brunson Nutridge, Artist; Jay Claude, Gay Men of African Descent; Kevin McGruder, Gay Men of African Descent

Brunson Nutridge, Artist

Joyce McDonald, Artist

The Balm in Gilead,

in observance of the Black Church Week of Prayer, presented six black artist art work.

The presentation entitled, *Healing Art: Visual Artists of African Descent in the Face of AIDS* was very well received and attended by black ministers of numerous Black Churches within the New York area as well as the *Daily News, NY1* and *WMBC, channel 69*. The project of Healing Art was conceived by committee member Ademola Mandella who stated that, "it is through this process of sharing visual expressions that we are healed from some of the pain that we have experienced from this epidemic." CEO and founder Pernessa C. Seele encouraged the attendees and press to get involved in educating the churches about HIV/AIDS and to keep the doors of communication open and flowing.

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COURTESY BYRON STEWART

A REAL READ: Doing Real Theatre

While Byron Stewart was pursuing a mainstream theater career, he just happened to catch a performance of the west coast gay male ensemble, Afro Pomo Homo.

Little did he know that this would be a turning point for him. Inspired by their work, Stewart began attending and performing at poetry readings in his native Chicago community. He even created and presented a one-man show, Black Out, which chronicled his personal saga as a gay man.

Stewart was amazed to find not only was there an audience for this type of theater, but there were other artists eager to participate in the creation of black gay productions. The Howard University graduate joined forces with two other local artists, Byron Mason and Sanford Gaylord, and together co-founded A Real Read, an African American gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered theater company based in Chicago, who prides itself on bringing a real message that is truthful and fierce. The company is committed to providing theater for, by, and about black alternative lifestyles.

Since its inception in 1996, A Real Read has had a number of acclaimed productions to its credit; Manchild, a drama about a bisexual drug dealer whose life is steeped in crisis; also, We Heard the Night Outside, which is the love story of the poets Essex Hemphill and Larry Duckette.

The company began with a faithful few, who were brave and bold enough to share their own stories. The company soon turned to pieces written by local gay and lesbian playwrights and poets, which were performed for local fundraisers, community events, and some Chicago high schools. The founders of A Real Read are proud that their company is made up of diverse genders, sexualities, and both professional and community actors.

A Real Read has never been afraid to be real. These artists take on the hard issues: relationships, HIV and AIDS, and the plain trials and triumphs of living in the life. About their dramatic works, Stewart says, "They come straight at ya." No apologies, no compromises.

According to Stewart, the response to A Real Read has been fantastic. Its work appeals to a wide range of people. From Blacks, Latinos, and whites, to straight and gay folk. As the word gets out, A Real Read is receiving invitations to other stages, both in and outside of Chicago. The company performed at New York University's Tisch School of Performing Arts and was featured on "In The Life", a PBS television show.

The company has also completed its first theater festival, "ALL OUT," which was comprised of five plays by Atlanta based playwright, Shirlene Holmes. These plays, which ranged from the sacred to the profane, paint a realistic picture of Black gay and lesbian life. From the sensitive and romantic, A Lady and a Woman, to the real and risque toast, Peaches.

Doing this play festival, which ran earlier this spring at the Baileywick Theatre, created excitement in the company and provided company members an opportunity to grow, and exposed the Chicago audience to other great pride plays. For this festival, A Real Read brought in guest directors, which was also a first. The festival was "all Black and all gay," Stewart exclaims with pride. And new projects are already in the works. He exhorts, "There's no excuse–it's here for you. Come and get it."

- S. Holmes

Sheryl Lee Ralph

From Dreamgirl to waitress; mistress to hair salon owner; voodou priestess to mother; Sheryl Lee Ralph has run the gamut when it comes to performing. From a young age, Sheryl has worked with the likes of Bill Cosby and Sidney Poitier in "Uptown Saturday Night", Denzel Washington in "The Mighty Quinn", Robert DeNiro in "The Mistress" and "Whoppi Goldberg in "Sister Act Two", just to name a few. Her recent portrayal of Brandy's step-mother on UPN's "Moesha" is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to working for Sheryl.

Sheryl's recent endeavors revolve around directing. "Directing is a natural and necessary progression for me. I felt the need to give life to stories and characters that have been silent for too long for too many reasons."

Little do many people know, but Sheryl also produces a benefit to raise funds for AIDS every year in May called "DIVAS! Simply Singing!

This magnetic show hosts Divas of all genre's singing one song accompanied by piano only! (Now you know you better know how to sing) "AIDS is a disease that has touched my life in many ways, and it just seemed natural to give back work at helping to fight a disease that has crippled our lives."

Sheryl has two beautiful children named Etienne and Ivy. "These two are my greatest accomplishments. They've made me see and realize what a beauty life really is."

TRIVIA QUESTION: What was the name of the only album Sheryl recorded?

The first person to answer correctly will receive an autographed photo from Sheryl.

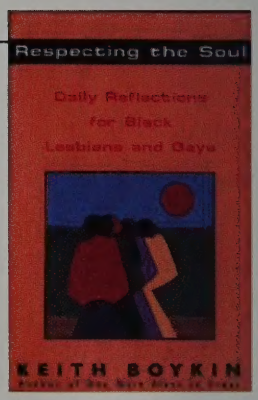
Send repies to:

editor@venusmagazine.com or fax to 914.376.1666. Include a mailing address!

- Kimberly Purnell

Respecting the Soul

RESPECTING THE SOUL:
Daily Reflections for Black Lesbians and Gays
by Keith Boykin
Avon Books, 1999



Respecting The Soul is the first daily reflections book for the black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community. The book is also targeted toward friends and family members of black lesbians and gays and anyone else who is dealing with issues of race or sexual orientation.

Respecting the Soul brings together the wit and wisdom of such diverse black heroes and sheroes as Alvin Ailey, Josephine Baker, James Baldwin, James Cleveland, Angela Davis, Peter Gomes, Lorraine Hansberry, Esse#πx Hemphill, Nona Hendryx, Langston Hughes, Carl Lewis, Little Richard, Audre Lorde, Jackie "Moms" Mabley, Nelson Mandela, Huey Newton, Me'Shell Ndege'Ocello, RuPaul, Bayard Rustin, Billy Strayhorn, Sylvester, Alice Walker, Flip Wilson, and many others, including the black and Latino drag queens who launched the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion.

Like Breathing

Like Breathing
Ric Rollins
Ishai Books, 1999

In his debut novel, Like Breathing, Ric Rollins has set the scene for the potentially rich interaction of characters. Public relations guru and all-around nice guy, Zander Eady, is on a quest for love. He thought he found it in the arty and closeted Gage Gregory, until the latter's exit to fulfill familial commitments. Parallel to their antics, we encounter the sassy wit of Rita Eady, Zander's "Big Mama," and the campy tirades of best friend Desmond Lowe. The story wouldn't be complete without the obligatory Diva, Zander's boss, Elle Paige. There's even a nod towards tragedy in Hakiem Adams, a disowned, HIV positive teen, which Zander believes he's mentoring. But Zander forgets him—and everyone else—when the possibility of real love shows up in the dashing news anchor, Jordan Jacobs.

Kudos to Rollins' depiction of black men who are unapologetic about their sexual identities. Rollins attempts to locate black gay men (BGM) within the supportive contexts of family and community while grappling with the search for love and self-fulfillment. The emotional development and portrayal of characters' psyches take a back seat to Rollins's concentration on their material possessions. The interesting subtexts around internet dating and the body image consciousness of BGM are never fully explored. However it is a worthy effort.

—review by Doug Jones

Last Rights

by Marvin K. White
Alyson Publications,1999

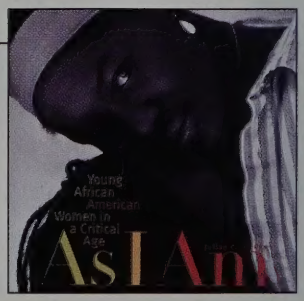
Last Rights is a powerful, passionate collection of verse which explores the essence of what it means to be black and gay. From homophobia in the African American community, to the double-barreled rage which comes from being a double minority, White's prose often leaps from the page in red-hot explosions, but it also exhibits heartrending tenderness when paying tribute to friends, lovers, parents, and community. It is an unforgettable combination.

When Marvin White writes of these things, you do not read them. You feel them. Deep inside, in places you have not visited before. You are there, on his street, in his church, singing, laughing, fighting, grieving.

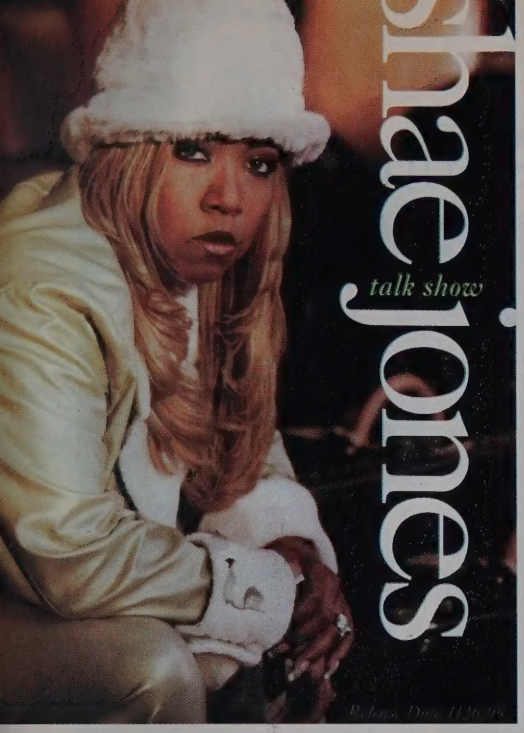
> *"Can you feel it/shakes before an earthquake/can you feel it/like the itch in your palm/ when payday is near/you can feel it/like the still birdsong before an eruption/can you feel it/like the still birdsong before an eruption/can you feel it/rolling in like a spirit riding a storm. ..."* He asks this in "Until." Yes Marvin, we can.

As I Am

Young African American Women in a Critical Age
by Julian C. R. Okwu
Chronicle Books, 1999 Paperback, $22.95



Acclaimed photographer Julian Okwu introduces us to thirty-six remarkable women who, in their own way, promote the triumph of the human spirit over diversity. Calling on lessons learned from their mothers, sisters, teachers, and friends, the thirty-six women of As I Am speak candidly about what it means to be a young African American woman living in the dawn of the new millennium.



talk show

It's not everyday a star is born. In a world of cookie cutter entertainers, musical sensations are more often created than discovered. Shae Jones is one of those rare discoveries. She is also a natural woman, one who speaks her mind—loud and clear on her debut disc Talk Show, the first release on M3, r & b singer Montell Jordan's record label, distributed by Universal Records. "I'm blunt, bottom-line and straightforward," cautions Shae, who song by song unleashes razor-sharp observations and potent vocals.

Talk Show travels through the in-your-face exploits of a '90s woman. With interludes that push the album's plot forward, the 14-track collection explores sex, love, and the drama associated with both. "My project is about women voicing their opinions. It's a wake-up call for men." Shae co-wrote three cuts on the album, with a majority of the writing and production handled by the platinum-selling Montell Jordan and his M3 crew (Shep Crawford, Dove Daniels and Jazz "The Man").

The first single is the timely "Talk Show Shhh!"—a saucy ballad about adultery with a story torrid enough for Jerry Springer (who makes a cameo in the "Talk Show Shhh!" video), co-written and produced by Jordan. The pumped up "Talk Show Shhh! (remix)" spices up the album even more.

"Got me goin' round/When I take him down/Makes me want it bad/Ain't nothing like a bad boy," Shae sensually sings over the infectious beat of the sizzler "Bad Boy." Rapper Ja Rule, a member of the soon to be released Bad Boy recording group Murder Inc. (with DMX and Jay-Z), provides the rhyme.

"If My Man Finds Out" is a funky upbeat tale of an unfaithful but blissful romance written by Jordan and produced by Teddy Bishops, producer of Jordan's chart-topping "Let's Ride." The laid-back, bumping "Let Him Go" explores the undeniable physical attraction of an ex, while "Symptoms Of A Heartbreak" is an arresting, emotional ballad about the painful end of a relationship.

Shae's deep, powerful vocals make you feel the hurt. On the explosive "Him And You," Shae teams up with another straightforward songstress, Kelly Price. The two dynamic divas take control of the song, written by Price and produced by Jazz.

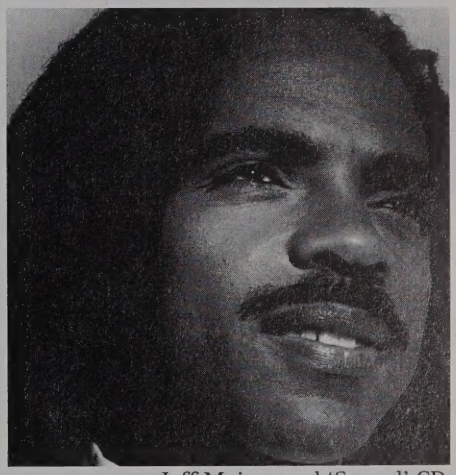
Rounding out the Talk Show set is the inspirational "Hold On," a cut co-written by Shae, Jordan, and Crawford, and featuring the Fulfillment Choir. It's Shae's "stay strong" anthem for women.

soothing the spirit

Need something to help you relieve pent-up stresses that mount from the arduous hardships of today's world? Try listening to *Sacred*, the soothing album by Jeff Majors. Crossing all religious boundaries with its universal appeal, *Sacred* eases the spirit and refreshes the soul with cheerful and joyous interpretations of eleven spiritual favorites. The album's chiming melodies soak into even the most frazzled emotional state to produce sunny mental images.

Affectionately named Hanifah—which is the name of an ancient Egyptian queen who used her beauty and wisdom to heal—Majors uses his custom-made harp to deliver rhythm-inspired melodies of spiritual love to generate a warm, back-home, family feeling.

Favorites like "Blessed Assurance" and "Walk in the Light" offer hints of breezy Caribbean rhythm while maintaining the essence of the songs' traditional melody, as does "Precious Lord", which draws its strength, in part, from the emotive vocals of gospel great Genobia Jeter.

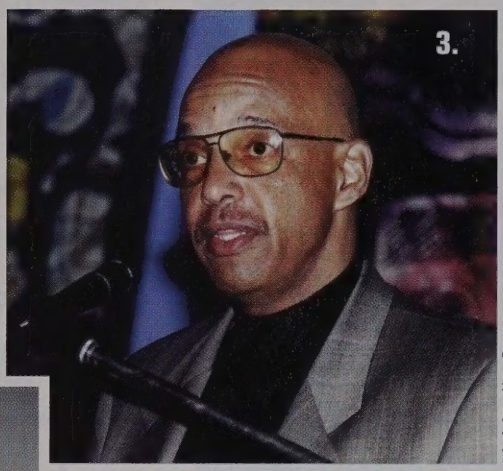

Jeff Majors and 'Sacred' CD

A quiet, reserved student of music, Majors first experienced "playing" the harp in a dream while still a teenager. After finishing high school, Majors moved to California, where he studied music under the guidance of artist Alice Coltrane, widow of jazz legend John Coltrane. He later returned to his roots to share his soothing music with an array of kinsmen—from school children to inmates in correctional facilities. Also produced by Majors, this very special CD takes listeners on a *Sacred* musical journey.

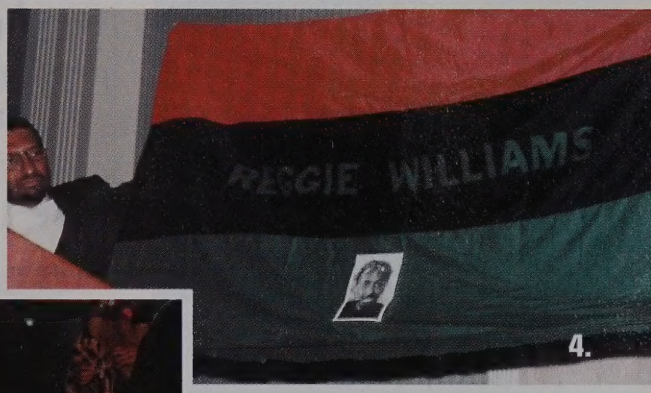
Atlanta Conference - 12th Annual NBLGLC

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARY MCNAMARA

1. Grammy-award winner, Regina Belle, signs autographs after she performed cuts from her new CD *'Believe In Me'* at the National Black Lesbian and Leadership Conference in Atlanta last February. 2. Comedienne, Karen Williams, Mistress of Ceremonies 3. Monique Meadows, former office director of the NBLGLF and current Vice President of the Black Lesbian Support Group, Washington, D.C. accepting the Mabel Hampton award. 4. [l to r] Sheila Duckworth, Barbara Tyler, and Martha Bell (Barbara's mother) 5. [l to r] Michael Gipson, C. Smith, Jaron Bryant 6. [l] Dwight Canter and Greg Eugene 7. Sydney J. Thompson of Portland, OR 8. [l to r] Martina Downey, Paula Polk, and Panda 9. Debra Rose 10. Martin Ornelas-Quintero, Executive Director of LLEGO accepting the Allie Award 11. Author, James Earl Hardy accepting the James Baldwin Award 12. Keiron Williams, of the Morehouse College Gay Student Alliance, accepting the Joan Fountain Award. 13. [l to r] Karen Williams, Dr. Kofi Adoma - Violinist and activist of Detroit, MI., Dr. Marjorie Hill - Commissioner of New York City Workers Compensation Board.

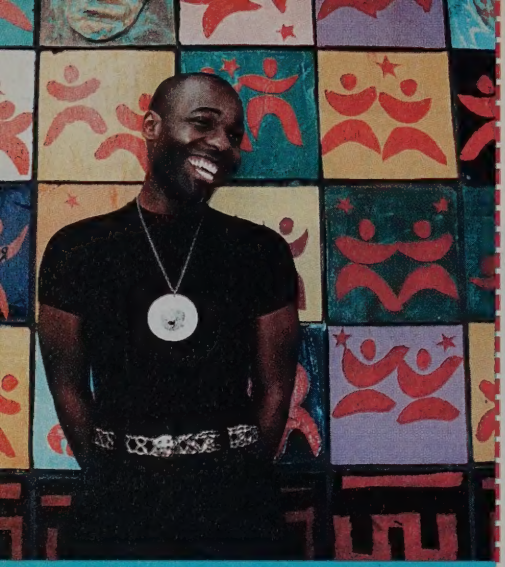


1,2, & 3 BY NEIL COLLINS



4 & 5 BY MARY MCNAMARA

1. Gay Men Of African Descent, GMAD honor Outstanding Men at the Conservatory of Black Theater in New York City. Honorees include [l to r] GMAD staff member Ray Williams, Rev. Zachary Jones - Pastor of Unity Fellowship Church of Brooklyn, NY, Keith Boykin - author of Respecting the Soul: Daily Reflections of Black Lesbians and Gays, Cleo Manago - Executive Director of AMASSI Center of Inglewood, CA, Activist George Bellinger of New York, and New York City Councilman Phil Reed. **2.** GMAD Board of Director, [top row, l to r] Kenneth Tolbert, Keith Amperado, Dariel Jones, Russell Baptiste, David Walker, Edward Thomas, William Richardson, Ivery Thomas, [bottom row] GMAD Executive Director Kevin McGruder, staff member Donald Powell, Board members Reginald Sanford, Michaels Saunders and Terrich Marable. **3.** The Honorable Phil Reed, New York City councilman, the Keynote speaker. **4.** Activist George Bellinger unveils a tribute to the late Reggie Williams, at the 12th National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Conference in Atlanta. Williams, a Black Gay and AIDS activist died last Feb. **5.** [l to r] Monique Meadows, M'Bwende Anderson, and Charlotte Young at NBLGLC.



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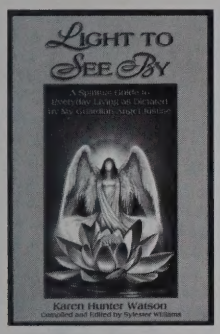

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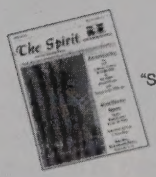

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BY REGINA M. KNOTTS

OUT at the Beauty Shop

The beauty shop, like the black church, is a staple in our community for sisterly discourse. It's supposed to be a safe place where sistahs can discuss their lives openly knowing that their feelings will be heard and acknowledged. But what happens to that safety for lesbian, bisexual, or transgender sistahs when the context of the beauty shop is completely heterosexual? It becomes a land mine-filled with difficult choices about how to be...what to say...and what to hide in a place that's supposed to be free of hidden explosions. Despite the comfort I felt in this sisterspace, I knew I'd eventually step on one of those damn mines. I remember the explosion: "So Regina, do you go out much?" my stylist asked.

For months I've waited for "the question" to be asked-one whose answer would reveal aspects of me that would change my relationship with my stylist forever. I am afraid, and I'm sitting here wondering why. I don't just fear rejection from this individual sistah. I also fear permanent ejection from a nurturing ground within the black community. But if I stay in the closet, I'll automatically cut off my soul from its regenerative energy, right? You have two choices, Regina, come out and risk external rejection, or stay in the closet and let your spirit suffocate. I chose the latter: "Oh, I'm too busy," I answered, hoping she would be satisfied with my deflection. She left it alone and went on to another topic while I went back to hiding my soul. I simply could not overcome my fear of being permanently exiled from the black community.

Writing this piece has certainly helped me face this deep fear and to recognize the need to reflect and pray about it. "Lord, my soul feels cut off from the love that exists in others. I'm so eager to connect with my people and to the love within me. Which path should I take? What choice should I make?" My answer came later that day through a sistahfriend who wrote: Our connection is our quest for touching our divinity within our humanity-and to seek the Light in those we encounter. Be open, be honest, and let your Light shine. Those who can't stand the Light shall remain in the dark no matter what you do.

As I stare at her words, recognition sets in and tears flow from my soul. I have a new weapon to battle my fears. For that, I will be eternally grateful.

By the time you read this, I will have come out to those I suspect are waiting for me to come into my own Light and share. For those of you, like me, whose greatest fear is being cut off from the energy of the black community, focus on your Divine Light. Do that and the right choice will be there for all to see.

Thanks Sweet Lord the message has been received.

Regina M. Knotts, a native of Newark, Delaware, currently manages an interviewing site for a marketing research firm. She is an aspiring sociologist who is preparing for a return to graduate school.

I FEAR PERMANENT EJECTION FROM A NURTURING GROUND WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY. BUT IF I STAY IN THE CLOSET, I'LL AUTOMATICALLY CUT OFF MY SOUL FROM ITS REGENERATIVE ENERGY, RIGHT?

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Being HIV+ isn't easy.

It's a daily challenge that can take all you've got. It helps to have an advantage – to lighten your load and keep you going. Federal healthcare guidelines now call for including a potent protease inhibitor as part of combination treatments to fight HIV. Consider these reasons to make the protease inhibitor CRIXIVAN the foundation of your treatment regimen.

CRIXIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIXIVAN can help reduce the chance of illnesses and death associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Some patients may not experience these effects. CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS.

New NIH research showed people taking CRIXIVAN in triple therapy lived longer and experienced fewer opportunistic infections.

Recent year-long research conducted by the National Institutes of Health (Protocol ACTG 320) studied over 1,000 patients and confirmed results from another study.

The group of patients receiving CRIXIVAN along with 3TC and AZT achieved a reduction in deaths and AIDS-defining illnesses over those taking 3TC and AZT alone. This reduction was significant enough for the NIH to recommend the study be stopped, so that all participants could benefit from the findings. Because the study was ended early, there was insufficient data to determine the statistical impact of CRIXIVAN on survival.

CRIXIVAN in triple therapy continues to hold serum viral load down below the limit of detection at the one year mark.

In a separate, ongoing landmark study, over 90% of the 31 patients receiving CRIXIVAN, AZT, and 3TC reduced their HIV serum viral load below the limit of detection after 24 weeks (as measured by available tests; the virus may still be present in other organ systems).

Importantly, the limited number of patients who chose to stay with the study for longer periods of time maintained these results through the one year mark.

CRIXIVAN is generally well tolerated.

CRIXIVAN can be taken with a light meal or on an empty stomach. There are side effects associated with protease inhibitors in general and CRIXIVAN in particular. Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN may develop kidney stones. For some, this can lead to more severe kidney problems including kidney failure. Drinking at least 6 glasses of water each day may help reduce the chance of forming a kidney stone. Other side effects reported include rapid breakdown of red blood cells and liver problems. There are some common medications and AIDS-related medications you should not take with CRIXIVAN. Discuss all medications you are taking or plan to take with your doctor.

As with other protease inhibitors, increased bleeding in some patients with hemophilia and increased blood sugar levels or diabetes have been reported. Please read the following page for detailed information on side effects and dosing.

CRIXIVAN may help you live a longer, healthier life.

CRIXIVAN is the number one choice of doctors.*

CRIXIVAN is prescribed for more patients than any other protease inhibitor. With this commitment to CRIXIVAN comes a commitment to product improvements and further research in the battle against HIV. CRIXIVAN is being studied in a broad range of patients and in many different combinations. Ask your doctor for the latest news and developments.

* IMS America; 3/96 - 7/98.

Focus on the rest of your life.

Learn all you can about HIV therapy. Talk with your doctor. Stay informed and stay the course. With viral load below the limit of detection and an increase in CD4 T-cells, it's easier to look forward to the future with confidence.

Please read the following page for more detailed information about CRIXIVAN.

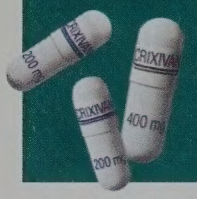
Remember to ask your doctor about CRIXIVAN.

CRIXIVAN®
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules

Going the distance.

MERCK

www.crixivan.com



CRIXIVAN®
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules

Patient Information about CRIXIVAN* (KRIK-sih-van)
for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: indinavir (in-DIH-nuh-veer) sulfate

Please read this information before you start taking CRIXIVAN. Also, you should read the information included with CRIXIVAN each time you receive your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss CRIXIVAN when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups. You should remain under a doctor's care when using CRIXIVAN and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is CRIXIVAN?

CRIXIVAN is an oral capsule used for the treatment of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). CRIXIVAN is a type of HIV drug called a protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor.

How does CRIXIVAN work?

CRIXIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIXIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. CRIXIVAN may not have these effects in all patients.

CRIXIVAN is usually prescribed with other anti-HIV drugs such as ZDV (also called AZT), 3TC, ddI, ddC, or d4T. CRIXIVAN works differently from these other anti-HIV drugs. Talk with your doctor about how you should take CRIXIVAN.

CRIXIVAN has been studied in adults. The safety and effectiveness of CRIXIVAN in children and adolescents have not been established.

How should I take CRIXIVAN?

There are six important things you must do to help you benefit from CRIXIVAN:

1. **Take CRIXIVAN capsules every day as prescribed by your doctor.** Continue taking CRIXIVAN unless your doctor tells you to stop. Take the exact amount of CRIXIVAN that your doctor tells you to take, right from the very start. To help make sure you will benefit from CRIXIVAN, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays." If you don't take CRIXIVAN as prescribed, the activity of CRIXIVAN may be reduced (due to resistance).
2. **Take CRIXIVAN capsules every 8 hours around the clock, *every day.*** It may be easier to remember to take CRIXIVAN if you take it at the same time every day. If you have questions about when to take CRIXIVAN, your doctor or health care provider can help you decide what schedule works for you.
3. **If you miss a dose by more than 2 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time.** However, if you miss a dose by less than 2 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of CRIXIVAN at any one time.
4. **Take CRIXIVAN with water.** You can also take CRIXIVAN with other beverages such as skim or non-fat milk, juice, coffee, or tea.
5. **Ideally, take each dose of CRIXIVAN without food but with water at least one hour before or two hours after a meal.** Or you can take CRIXIVAN with a light meal. Examples of light meals include:
   - dry toast with jelly, juice, and coffee (with skim or non-fat milk and sugar if you want)
   - corn flakes with skim or non-fat milk and sugar

   Do not take CRIXIVAN at the same time as any meals that are high in calories, fat, and protein (for example — a bacon and egg breakfast). When taken at the same time as CRIXIVAN, these foods can interfere with CRIXIVAN being absorbed into your bloodstream and may lessen its effect.
6. **It is critical that you drink at least six 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) throughout the day, every day. CRIXIVAN can cause kidney stones.** Having enough fluids in your body should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (middle to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Does CRIXIVAN cure HIV or AIDS?

CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS. People taking CRIXIVAN may still develop infections or other conditions associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important for you to remain under the care of a doctor. Although CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS, CRIXIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses, including death, associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN may not have these effects in all patients.

Does CRIXIVAN reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

CRIXIVAN has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take CRIXIVAN?

Do not take CRIXIVAN if you have had a serious allergic reaction to CRIXIVAN or any of its components.

What other medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my doctor?

Talk to your doctor if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while you are taking CRIXIVAN. We do not yet know how CRIXIVAN affects pregnant women or their developing babies.
- You are breast-feeding. You should stop breast-feeding if you are taking CRIXIVAN.

Also talk to your doctor if you have:

- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease caused by cirrhosis.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Diabetes
- Hemophilia

Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking or plan to take, including non-prescription medicines.

Can CRIXIVAN be taken with other medications?**

Drugs you should not take with CRIXIVAN:

SELDANE® (terfenadine)	HISMANAL® (astemizole)
VERSED® (midazolam)	HALCION® (triazolam)
PROPULSID® (cisapride)	Ergot medications (e.g., Wigraine® and Cafergot®)

Taking CRIXIVAN with the above medications could result in serious or life-threatening problems (such as irregular heartbeat or excessive sleepiness).

In addition, you should not take CRIXIVAN with rifampin, known as RIFADIN®, RIFAMATE®, RIFATER®, or RIMACTANE®.

Drugs you can take with CRIXIVAN include:

RETROVIR® (zidovudine, ZDV also called AZT)	BIAXIN® (clarithromycin)
TAGAMET® (cimetidine)	isoniazid (INH)
DIFLUCAN® (fluconazole)	ORTHO-NOVUM 1/35® (oral contraceptive)
EPIVIR™ (lamivudine, 3TC)	ZERIT® (stavudine, d4T)

BACTRIM®/SEPTRA® (trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole)

VIDEX® (didanosine, ddI) — If you take CRIXIVAN with VIDEX®, take them at least one hour apart.

MYCOBUTIN® (rifabutin) — If you take CRIXIVAN with MYCOBUTIN®, your doctor may adjust both the dose of MYCOBUTIN and the dose of CRIXVAN.

NIZORAL® (ketoconazole) — If you take CRIXIVAN with NIZORAL®, your doctor may adjust the dose of CRIXIVAN.

Talk to your doctor about any medications you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of CRIXIVAN?

Like all prescription drugs, CRIXIVAN can cause side effects. The following is **not** a complete list of side effects reported with CRIXIVAN when taken either alone or with other anti-HIV drugs. Do not rely on this page alone for information about side effects. Your doctor can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN developed kidney stones. In some of these patients this led to more severe kidney problems, including kidney failure or inflammation of the kidneys. Drinking at least six 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) each day should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (middle to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN have had rapid breakdown of red blood cells (hemolytic anemia) which in some cases was severe or resulted in death.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN have had liver problems including liver failure and death. Some patients had other illnesses or were taking other drugs. It is uncertain if CRIXIVAN caused these liver problems.

Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) have occurred in patients taking protease inhibitors. In some of these patients, this led to ketoacidosis, a serious condition caused by poorly controlled blood sugar. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients required adjustments to their diabetes medication. Others needed new diabetes medication.

In some patients with hemophilia, increased bleeding has been reported.

Clinical Studies

Increases in bilirubin (one laboratory test of liver function) have been reported in approximately 10% of patients. Usually, this finding has not been associated with liver problems. However, on rare occasions, a person may develop yellowing of the skin and/or eyes.

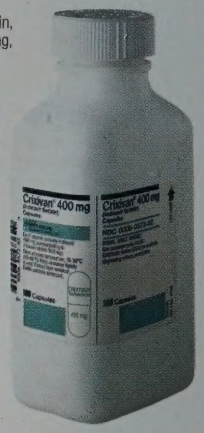
Side effects occurring in 2% or more of patients included: abdominal pain, fatigue or weakness, flank pain, feeling unwell, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, acid regurgitation, loss of appetite, dry mouth, back pain, headache, trouble sleeping, dizziness, taste changes, rash, upper respiratory infection, dry skin, and sore throat.

Swollen kidneys due to blocked urine flow occurred rarely.

Marketing Experience

Other side effects reported since CRIXIVAN has been marketed include: abdominal swelling; inflammation of the kidneys; increased fat appearing in areas such as the neck, abdomen, and back; change in skin color; severe skin reactions; hair loss; crystals in the urine; and allergic reactions.

Tell your doctor promptly about these or any other unusual symptoms. If the condition persists or worsens, seek medical attention.



How should I store CRIXIVAN capsules?

- Keep CRIXIVAN capsules in the bottle they came in and at room temperature (59°F-86°F).
- Keep CRIXIVAN capsules dry by leaving the small desiccant "pillow" in the bottle. Keep the bottle closed.

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep CRIXIVAN and all medicines out of the reach of children. If you suspect that more than the prescribed dose of this medicine has been taken, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

This provides a summary of information about CRIXIVAN. If you have any questions or concerns about either CRIXIVAN or HIV, talk to your doctor.

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Capsules

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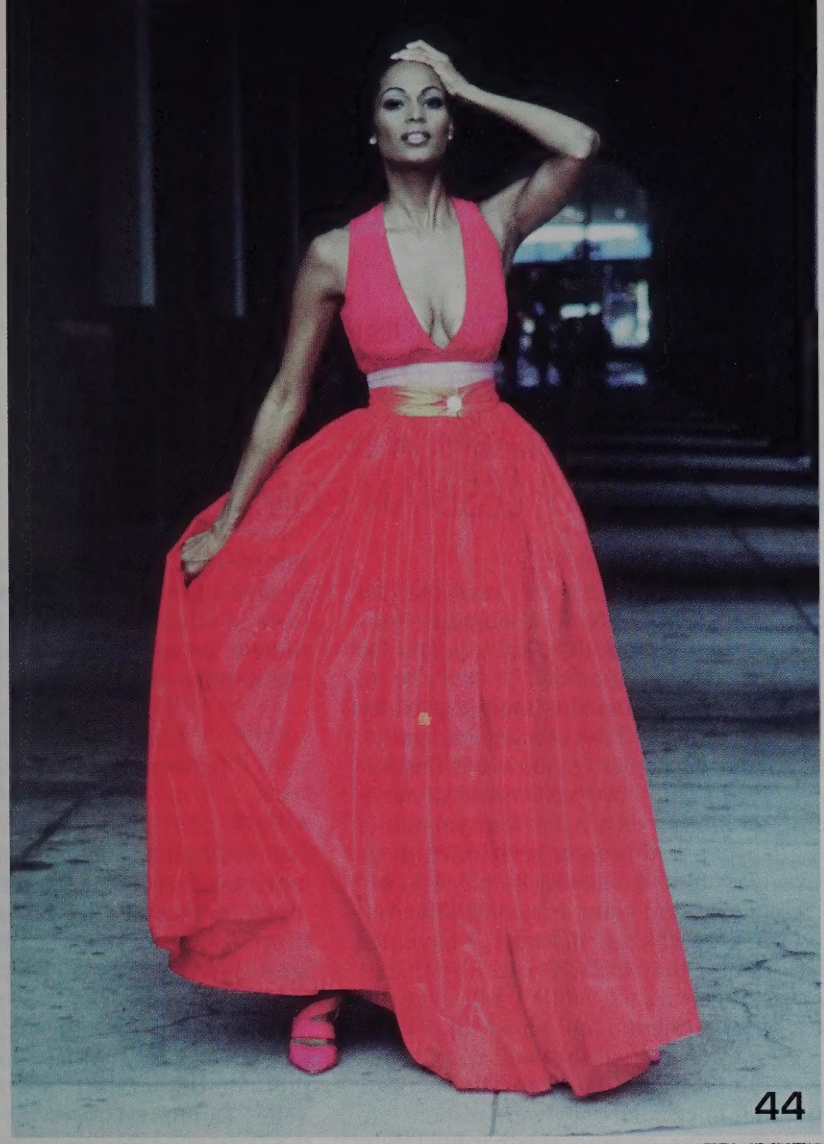
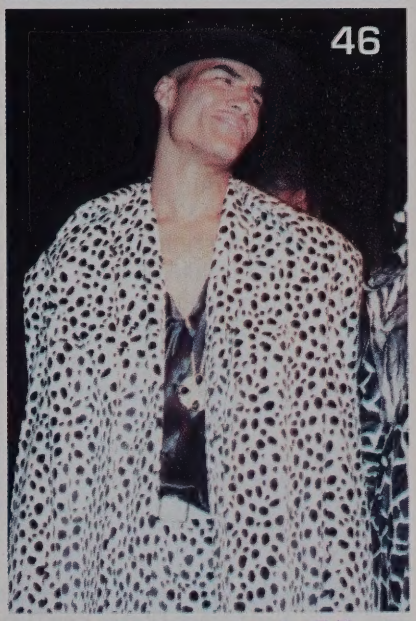
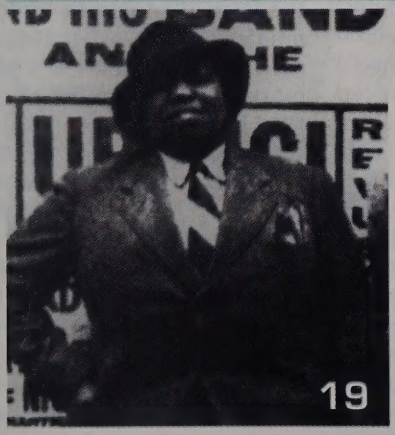
contents







FEATURES 12 The Comfort Zone. Visit the new Harlem speakeasy 50 **A Real Read:** A Chicago theater company makes no apologies **DEPARTMENTS** 16 **Spirit** "Mary and Lou": visit the town of Cotsville with an adoring fictional story by an Atlanta playwright! 44 **Style Wise** On the catwalk with New York designer Barron Wise 46 Lloyd Boston's Men of Color come alive 19 **Milestone** featuring Gladys Bentley 36 **Travel** Cruzan in St. Croix 42 **Technology** The Y2K Problem and you **IN EVERY ISSUE** 6 **letters** 24 **people** 25 **congrats** 26 **sex talk, ask marian** 34 **To the point** Terms of Endearment. Should we embrace terms used to degrade us? by Don Charles 52 **Books** Respecting the Soul, Like Breathing, Last Rights, As I Am 53 **Music** New CDs by Shae Jones, Jeff Majors 58 **SistahSpeak** Out at the Beauty Shop **ON THE COVER** Christopher of The Comfort Zone, photography by Tina Paul

"I FROZE IN MY SEAT AS I READ THE ISSUE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. GOD ANSWERED A PRAYER FOR ME. UP UNTIL THAT DAY, I'D NEVER HEARD ANYONE DISCUSS THE ISSUE, ESPECIALLY IN THE BLACK GAY/LESBIAN COMMUNITY."

GREAT EXPERIENCE

I have been reading your magazine for the past year and it has really been a great experience. Your articles are most informative and I love the "Out and About" section. Venus is like a black "In the Life" Vanity Fair (smile).

I would like to see features on more people in the arts, like George C. Wolfe and many others who are gay and have a high profile. They are great role models of the fact that you can be successful and still remain true to yourself.

Keep up the good work!

James K. Mathis
Conservatory of Black Theater
New York City

NO FLUFF

I picked up the fifth anniversary issue [Vol. 4 No. 4] at Church Of the Open Door and wanted to congratulate you and your contributors for a fine publication.

It's great to see a national, glossy, well-designed magazine that's not full of fluff pieces. I especially appreciated Ulester Douglas' article on domestic violence. It really spotlighted the need for the creation of agencies and support networks within our communities in order to address the unique experiences of brothas and sistas in the life. Don Charles in "Brothatalk" took the words right out of my mouth. While the criticism of Bill Clinton by hypocritical Republicans turns my stomach, it is difficult for me to have sympathy for a man who has abandoned Black and lesbigaytrans Americans when it became politically expedient to do so.

Thank you very much for the Healthy Living Pocket Guide. The info and resources are great. Continued blessings.

Otis Richardson
Chicago, IL

A PRAYER ANSWERED

I froze in my seat as I read the last issue [Vol.4, No. 4] on domestic violence. God had answered a prayer for me. Up until that day, I'd never heard anyone discuss the issue (especially in the Black Gay/Lesbian community). You see, domestic violence is the major reason why I've decided to move to another city. After four years in a rather ambiguous relationship, at least four incidences of physical violence, and countless bouts of verbal and psychological abuse, I have declared that ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!! I'm getting out while I still have my health (mental and physical).

I just wanted to thank you for being obedient to God and the spirit of our ancestors. They were responsible for your placing this article; they knew that I needed further confirmation. I can go on, now--empowered and encouraged.

Anonymous

CAUGHT MY EYE

What really caught my eye was your article on BLACK GAYS IN CORPORATE AMERICA, [Vol.4, No.3,1998]. This topic should be discussed throughout EVERY company in America, as there are GAYS and LESBIANS in every field, trade, and industry.

I will spread the GOSPEL of Venus to others. Keep up the GREAT WORK!!

Michael Wilson
Raleigh, NC

SUCCESS STORIES

I really enjoyed the Corporate issue of Venus. One article that especially touched me was "A Black Dyke, Empowered"[Vol.4 No.3, 1998]. Thank you for including "success stories" of lesbian and gay people at work, and the great things that can be accomplished when we live in truth and believe in what we're doing. You continue to do such quality work for the community–thank you.

Gina Bowers
Communications Coordinator
Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center

A PLEASURE!

Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your Special 5th Anniversary issue. The rejuvenation section was a pleasure; the interview with Jewelle Gomez was inspirational; the James Baldwin page was a blast of clarity; Don Charles' essay on Bill Clinton was timely and thought provoking; the tribute to Venus Landin was very moving and the focus on domestic violence a reminder of the work that is left to be done. The magazine is a pleasure to look at and even more of a pleasure to read. Don't stop!

Pearl Cleage
Author, Playwright
Atlanta, GA

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

I walked past the bookstore and remembered I wanted to check out that gay magazine I'd saw once before a long time ago named Venus. I convinced my partner to come inside with me for just a minute while I checked it out.

As I walked over to it I couldn't shake the feeling that I knew that womyn on the cover. I kept telling myself it was stress and a overactive imagination.

How in the world would I out here in Seattle know the womyn on the cover of a magazine based in

New York. Right? But I kept looking anyway. I finally picked it up and stared at it and the name on the cover. It took a minute for the shock to settle but I knew that was Liki. [Venus Landin's childhood nick name] My neighbor. She lived across the street from me when we were both in high school in a little town in Michigan. I remembered that she had had a son and then my head started to swim as I remembered hearing she had been killed by her lover. I just stood there holding the magazine remembering all the good times we'd had together. She turned me on to Saturday Night Live and the Rocky Horror Picture Show. We used to sit on her porch in the summer and talk about music and hang out with her honey. All I kept remembering is how much I wish she was here now ...how I never got a chance to hang out with her when I was fully grown and tell her about all the things I'd learned about myself and the world and how she woulda told me something funny, and poignant all at the same time if I'd had that chance. I really miss her. After I left and went to college we lost touch; bumped into each other occasionally but not nearly enough looking back. Life can be so short and you don't even think about it until somebody you know is gone.

I didn't think it was strange that a magazine has been named in her memory.

She was rare and special. If one got a chance to know her you surely couldn't forget her. I wondered out of all the homophobic rants I heard back home about her life and death if anyone there knew or cared that she had a magazine named after her. And if it mattered enough for them to drop their fear and see her as she lived-vibrant, unafraid to make some tough choices and keep on stepping. Then I thought well I have a chance to remember her that way and I will. Thanks for the memories and putting one of my old friends on the cover and keeping her memory alive through your magazine.

Meri Tahset
Seattle, WA

APPLAUSE

I first want to say how much I thoroughly enjoy your publication. It's been a while since I have seen a decent magazine that deals with our issues as a same gender loving community and with pertinent information that is useful for now or later. Applause is surely due for stepping out on faith and creating such a wonderful magazine.

Carlos V. Edwards
Cincinnati, OH

WAKE UP CALL

Having recently received my first issue, I have to say that I was very pleased with it! I applaud Ulester Douglass for his article on domestic violence in our community. It saddens me, that a beautiful sister, was killed, due to this plight.

Someone close to me, was in an abusive relationship for ten years.

She refuses to "label" it so, despite the fact that her ex-lover has menaced her with a machete, on more than one occasion. Her rationale, which is irrational, is that she is/was physically bigger and knew that "I could take her if need be." My friend is a passive butch.

Senseless, yes! What is even more senseless is that we, as a community have not created a powerful support system, where help can be readily accessible. This is clearly reflected in Cleo Manago's article about the black community caring about ourselves.

Continue to be what you are: Venus-a much needed voice, a wake up call, a resource for us!

A.R.@hotmail.com

Venus™

FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN THE LIFE

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NATIONAL ADVERTISING SALES
Higher Ground Marketing Group
Charlene Cothran
914 376-6161

Venus Magazine is published
4 times a year by
Cothran Publications, Inc.
P.O. Box 150
Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706
914-376-6161
Fax 914-376-1666
Email:editor@venusmagazine.com
www.venusmagazine.com

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with *Invisible Life*...
He rocked your world
with *Just As I Am*...

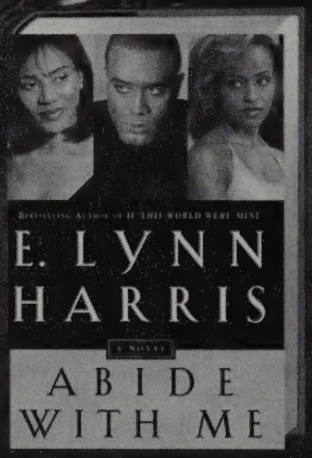
Now, *New York Times*
bestselling author

E. Lynn Harris

will ignite your soul
with his new novel

Abide with Me

Matthew Jordan Smith



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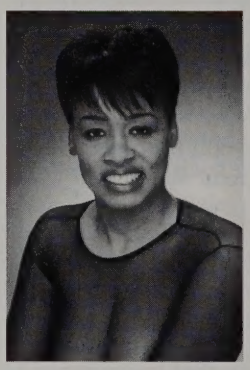
contributors

Shirlene Holmes, a Queens, NY native, is a nationally known playwright educator, and scholar, who is based in Atlanta, where she is an Associate Professor at Georgia State University. Her plays have been produced locally, nationally and internationally. Dr. Holmes is the 1997 recipient of the Nancy Dean Distinguished Playwriting Award, has plays and articles published in anthologies and magazines.



Kimberly "Q" Purnell, or "Q" as she is so affectionately called is a mover and shaker. Kimberly is an actress, writer, producer, singer, dancer, who recently won the 1998 Audelco Award for "Best Supporting Actress" and is currently working at producing her one-woman show, "The "Q" stands for Queer!" She is constantly experimenting and taking on challenging roles and responsibilities in her life and looks to continue to grow and learn. Motto: Always remember your past, because it is the key to your future!

Quohnos Mitchell is a freelance writer and publicist living in New York City. In addition to writing for Venus, his work has appeared in several national magazines including Vibe and Entertainment Weekly. His public relations firm currently handles publicity for BadBoy Entertainment. In this issue Quohnos takes us inside the 'Comfort Zone', a Harlem 'speak-easy' frequented by black gay men who have grown tired of the bars.

Regina M. Knotts, a native of Newark, Delaware, currently manages an interviewing site for a marketing research firm. She is an aspiring sociologist who is preparing for a return to graduate school. Her poignant essay explores the effects of homophobia in sacred black communal environments like The Beauty Shop.

Lessons in Living

My favorite Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Mason, from my old neighborhood recently visited our home with her husband, a deacon at the church where I grew up. She was accompanied by my dearest Mother Jackson and Miss Fannie both of at least 80 years. Aunt Liz, my grandmothers best friend, was accompanied by her two sons and was joined by a third son who lives here in New York. My life partner, Marian and I had invited them all to help us celebrate the 80th birthday of Mrs. Ollie Hall, my grandmother.

Naturally, we were thrilled when they accepted our invitation to make the trip from Trenton to New York City, about a 2 hour drive. Marian and I were a bit nervous but not really. We were more worried about the variety of our menu than anything else. We hadn't given one thought to tucking away the happy snap shot of us standing cheek to cheek which sits atop our piano or the dozens of books on the library shelves which include a display of gay literature or the copies of *Venus*, among other magazines, in the family room.

We wanted to present ourselves as we live everyday, the three of us, as a family.

Mrs. Mason, an articulate, warm and intelligent woman, has always been quite a progressive thinker. And although I had come out to her a couple of years ago, it was hard to predict how the afternoon would unfold. We broke the ice by passing around my mother's old photo albums which immediately jump-started memories and laughter. We later moved to the dinner table where Marian had prepared the 'Last' supper. As we held hands, I thought about asking Deacon Mason to offer the family prayer, but I decided to pray myself. Something in me needed to let them know that I am still in touch with heaven and most importantly, that heaven is still in touch with me!

By the end of the evening everyone was linked arm and arm, swaying to the music of Ella Fitzgerald as my nephew, Nathaniel, snapped birthday pictures and my grandmother, dance with her great grandson, Eric. What a wonderful afternoon it turned out to be. We had all experienced a new life lesson. For us, the lesson was that our people are ready to accept us, without sermons and lectures, just as we are, when we present ourselves with pride and dignity.

The lesson for them is that love makes a house a home, no matter who is living there.

The most dynamic part of this story is that this visit helped to move one Black church a little closer to accepting all it's family members and a little farther from it's history of homophobia. I'm told that Mrs. Mason, Deacon Mason and Mother Jackson all testified the following Sunday, one after the other, about what a fabulous time they had, and how "their home is filled with so much love, you know that God lives there."

Charlene Cothran,
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

Only Your Hairdresser Knows How

Poetic Healing

An anthology of poetry is being compiled of Lesbians of Color mainly about abuse, breast cancer, chemical dependency, lesbian phobia, racism, sexism and other life challenges that have healed you, others or promotes healing. Send a miximum of 3 original and unpublished poems to:

Chinwe Odeluga
1941 Gaston Place DR, #328
Autsin, TX 78723
or email: codebuga66@hotmail.com

Beauty and Health Work Together

Clairol, Inc., through its support of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is helping reduce breast cancer mortality rates among African-American women by working with the University of California at San Diego cancer Center (UCSD) to promote and support the Black Beauticians Health Promotion Program. This program recruits and trains beauticians to educate their clients on the importance of breast cancer screening and other healthy lifestyle choices.

Although the incidence of breast cancer is higher among Caucasian women than African-American women, the mortality rate among African American women is higher. Black beauticians were selected as focal point in reaching this high-risk population because discussions of a personal nature are commonplace inthe beauty salon. Within this community in particular, the relationship between client and stylist is strong and it is based on implicit trust and faith. Women spend a considerable amount of time at the beauty salon throughout the year and once a relationship is established, patrons rarely change beauticians.

The Black Beauticians Health Promotion Program was based on a pilot study conducted by the UCSD Cancer Center to determine whether beauticians can serve as health educators for information of special concern to their clients and whether they are able to motivate their clients to adopt health-promoting behaviors. The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation funded the expansion of this pilot program to a statistically significant study to be conducted over three years, (1997-2000). The study will provide answers about a new model of providing health information to women that can be replicated nationally.

Currently, 20 hair salons are participating in the program.

To maximize the beautician's power of persuasion and influence, the program relies upon the proven art of ancestral storytelling. Ms. Alyce Smith Cooper, a renowned storyteller, works with the beauticians to refine their art of storytelling and witnessing, both of which are recognized as an effective means of conveying social mores and values within the African-American community.

"It was conceivable that by conveying key information through the familiar methods of storytelling and witnessing, black women could become motivated to follow annual breast-cancer screening guidelines," said Georgia Robins Sadler, Ph.D., Associate Director for Outreach at UCSD Cancer Center.

ALTHOUGH THE INCIDENCE OF BREAST CANCER IS HIGHER AMONG CAUCASIAN WOMEN THAN AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN, THE MORTALITY RATE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IS HIGHER. BLACK BEAUTICIANS WERE SELECTED AS FOCAL POINT IN REACHING THIS HIGH-RISK POPULATION BECAUSE DISCUSSIONS OF A PERSONAL NATURE ARE COMMONPLACE IN THE BEAUTY SALON.

Gay Clients have Overwhelmingly Positive Experiences in Psychotherapy

Despite decades of tension between gays and lesbians and the mental health establishment, gay clients overwhelmingly report positive experiences in psychotherapy, according to a report by New York University Professors Mary Ann Jones and Martha A. Gabriel. The professors also found that gay and lesbian clients did not believe it was necessary to have psychotherapists who were gay themselves to have these positive experiences.

According to the study, lesbians and gay men begin treatment at an earlier age than their heterosexual counterparts, have longer periods of treatment, and seem to have a more favorable view of seeking professional help. Their reasons for entering therapy, however, are the same as heterosexual: dissatisfaction with relationships, their work life, their general sense of happiness and well-being.

Of the 600 individuals surveyed who identified as gay or lesbian, 2% were black, reports the NYC publicity office. According to Geanie Bond, a licensed marriage and family therapist with a busy practice of mostly African American gay and lesbian identified clients, black gays and lesbians are "more enthusiastic about therapy and tend to achieve better results and stay in therapy longer" than their black heterosexual counterparts. She also states that the pervasiveness of therapy as taboo in African American culture prevents most blacks from seeking therapy before the crisis stage. She says, "Black gays and lesbians tend to seek help a little before crisis because of compounded issues such as depression brought on by homophobia in black communities."

A red light bulb shines above the door that is the entrance to a luxurious and private meeting place tucked deep in heart of what we now call "Harlem World". Simply tagged Comfort Zone this well-appointed one hundred year old Brownstone is apart of a modern Harlem Renaissance where we have moved far beyond the self conscious creative awakening following the darkness of slavery, beyond the need to proclaim our existence by screaming: "If there' s cure for this I don't want it!!" and onto the next level of our reawakening were we proactively become accountable for our lives, our spirits, and our surroundings creating comfortable supportive safe environments for ourselves.

"I had no place that I wanted to go and just simply socialize," says president Byron Barnes. "I would call my friends to go out and they would all say they were going to bed because there was nothing worth going out to, and it would be 10 o'clock on a Saturday night! I wanted to create a place for my age group where you are not just let loose in a room with a drink in your hand."

After years of working in the cosmetics industry embellishing the looks of renowned personalities like Naomi Simms, Barbara Walters, Iman, and Beverly Johnson, Barnes wanted to give something back to the community.

"I had literally done everyone in the industry. There was not an eye or lip that I had not lined. I wanted a new challenged. I always say you have to know when to leave the party...before they put you out !!!", he chuckles. "I thought that I was good at hosting and planning. I always gave these big elaborate parties that people absolutely loved, so I wanted to do some sort of social club."

"It is not a new concept, it is an old concept with a new twist," he continues. "Comfort Zone is a modern throw back to what gay life was like around the Harlem Renaissance. When there were no gay bars and it was almost illegal to speak the word gay or homosexual; when gay people gathered in private homes to socialize be-

creating a r

ew comfort zone

Chip, Tim, Byron, Christian

"I would love to see a chain of Comfort Zones opened up Atlanta, Chicago and Washington D.C. Everyone aesthetically pleasing, here you can say hello and smile

cause they were a safe haven from a world that hated you and mistreated you because you were gay."

With what he calls a ghettoization of gay life, Barnes points out the need for an alternative to current clubs. "I am supplying something that people wanted but did not have," Byron says confidently. "With the explosion of hip hop as the popular culture, gays and lesbians have taken on some of the homophobic posturing of the rap culture." The younger kids like a place that is extremely anonymous were they do not have to say who they are or what their interest are. A place where everybody is holding up the wall, no one speaks, no one is introduced and there is no universal congeniality. They do not develop any social skills. It is a new thing that stems from gay people wanting to be perceived as straight even to each other," Barnes remarks. "Homophobic homosexuals. These are the type of things which keep us from making good mates for each other."

"There are a ton of intelligent professional black men. I just do not think that there are places where they can BE intelligent."

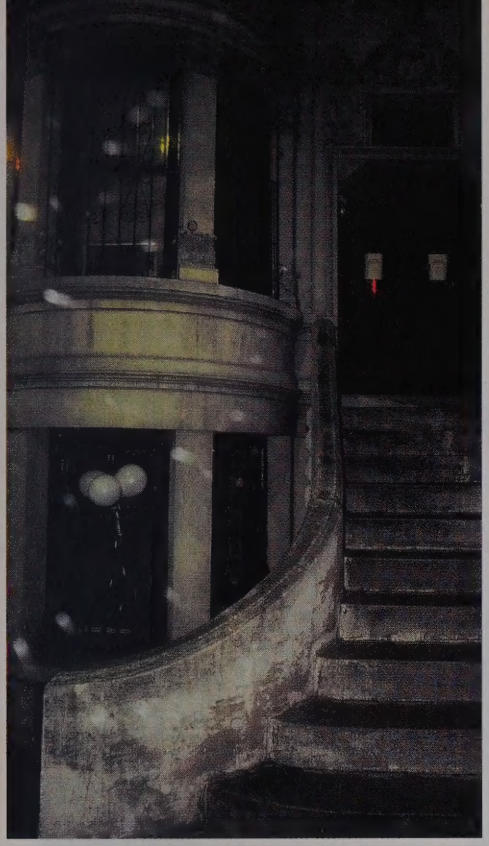
At one time gay people did not want to be perceived as straight. There was a time when we all twirled and wore blouses because we had pride in our gayness and you knew who where and you had a culture that supported.

As minority gays we have become apathetic when it come to our environment and the places we frequent because we have accepted certain conditions as normal. The fact that a place may not have something as simple as running water and clean bathrooms is not the exception but the norm. No one complains to the management. We accept it.

Comfort Zone is a combination of sultry afro-chicness reminiscent of "Looking for Langston" and the legendary decadence of "Paris is Burning" without the shade, separated into five distinct areas called "Zones".

Cross the doorstep and you immediately step into Zone I: "Community", where after being warmly greet by a host, you are invited too literally "Eat, drink, and be merry." Guests feel at home greeting old friends and making new ones while sampling from the complimentary buffet and open bar. Zone II, "Tranquillity," is the stylishly put together smoke free conversational lounge. A tasteful modern Afrocentric setting wher you'll see artists and authors, thinkers and leaders conversing about philosophy rather than who they had lasts night. In the 1920s you might have seen Claude McKay or Zora Neale Hurston. Today you may spot will authors like E. Lynn Harris chillin' with a hot wing.

Prior to moving into Zone III called "Simplicity," you must place your shoes in the lux silk lined shoe closet. After all this is the barefoot audio and visual space. Complimented by surround sound and full cable access, this is the perfect area to romp with a prospective date, read, or even meditate. Zone IV is Innovative Fitness Group, "Mobility" for short. This state of art private gym facility is available on an unsupervised



places like
wants a place that is
each other." —*Byron Barnes*

daily or weekly basis offering a variety of activities from physical therapy to self-defense. "Sensuality" is Zone V where you can enjoy a slow dance or a full body massage.

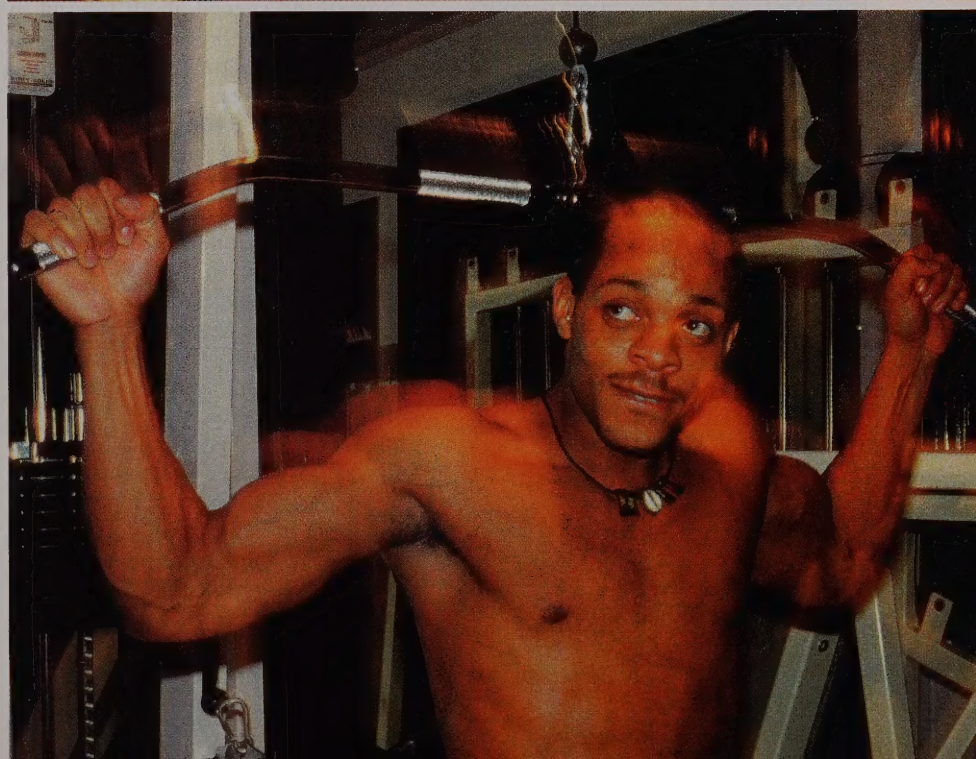
Aside from being a social gathering place, Comfort Zone hosts a variety of events including birthday parties to weddings. The doors are always open to community related organizations.

"I would love to see a chain of Comfort Zones opened up in places like Atlanta, Chicago and Washington, D.C. Everyone wants a place that is aesthetically pleasing, where you can say hello and smile at each other.

A place where you can sit and be comfortable and most of all where there is a service orientated staff. A staff that is professional and helpful.

Most of all people want a place were they can be themselves. People want to feel special. Ultimately we are all responsible for creating comfortable zones for each other.

—Quohnos Mitchell



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TINA PAUL

Mary and

A gifted playwright, performer, and professor, Dr. Shirlene Holmes originally selected "Mary and Lou" from her fictional Cotsville Stories series for Venus readers in early 1995. Back by popular demand, we now revisit the town of Cotsville!

Mary and Lou were bulldaggers. I can't say it no plainer than that. Everybody in Cotsville, from the front of the town to the back, knew Mary was a woman to her heart, but Lou had mannish ways. Lou even looked like a man with her plaid work shirt on and muddy construction worker boots.

It made Mother Martha's flesh crawl just to think about it; how in the world could two women's get together like that. She didn't like to mind people's business, but there was some things that even God don't like and that woman-for-woman mess was one of them things.

Clevertta didn't like them either and she would get on the phone with Teresa and talk loud about how Mary and Lou was living in sin and God was gonna clean their playhouse up one of these days. Teresa said, "Yes, chile, we can't have that around here with our children watching."

They both spent long dimes talking about how they wondered what bulldaggers did in bed. Clevertta said, "I can't be AC running on a DC current; give me a man. Two of 'em if you got 'em."

Teresa said, "I know what you mean, girl. All women can do for me is point me to the nearest man; shit, I wanna be satisfied, not frustrated."

Mary and Lou had long got over worrying about what people think and say. They had been together ten years. They had stuck it out and moving to Cotsville wasn't gonna change them none. Lou knew when she was a girl that sex and men don't mix. She had a Jamaican boy once and when the bleeding stopped, that was it. It was much harder for Mary at first. She had been married twelve years with one daughter and it took a lot to change her mind. What she liked about being with Lou is that she could be close to her and not be afraid.

Something special about talking to another woman, there's so much you don't have to explain. Loving a woman outside the bed was easy for Mary, but when it come to getting in the bed with a woman, that was the hardest thing to do for a long while. When she and Lou got together the first time, you couldn't tell Mary that God wasn't gonna set them on fire right in that bed.

But it never happened.

For a long time Missionary Porter kept telling everybody, the two were just friends. But wasn't no way in hell Magnolia and Gardenioa, the Flowers' twin girls, was gonna believe that Mary and Lou was just friends. Magnolia say they was Soddom and Go-morrah people and they going to hell sure as you're born. Gardenia say, "now, come on, sister, God got more sense than that. He's gonna leave them right here so we can see how not to live." Mother Martha would just shake her head and mumble about how queasy her stomach got every time Mary and Lou walked by.

Sometimes Lou and Mary wondered why in the hell they moved to Cotsville anyway knowing how much people hated them. They had put their mobile home in that town just till they could get their money together; that was five years ago. They kept saying they was gonna move, but every time spring come, they loved the place more and more. Not for the people, but for the trees and grass and lazy dogs that came and sat in their yard each day.

When they needed a laugh, Mary and Lou would stop and talk about that get-acquainted barbecue they had when they first moved to Cotsville. They wanted people to see they was normal and nice. Several folks came to that Fourth of July cook out and ate like pigs. Mother Martha stuffed herself so full, Clovis Jr. had to hold her steady as she waddled home. Clevertta sniffed all the food before she ate it, just to make sure it was sanitary. Betty Lou wouldn't even use the restroom; she walked all the way home and had to pee so bad when she got there, she could almost taste it. Mary and Lou knew it was the itch of their curiosity that drove everybody to the Fourth of July affair. They gave up on the people of Cotsville and decided to stay to themselves.

The only one that befriended them was Missionary Porter who didn't care

Lou

what they was doing. They was Jesus' children and she didn't pay the people in Cotsville no mind. Mildred kept telling the Missionary that she'd get a "nasty woman's disease" if she went in that trailer and used the toilet.

But Missionary paid Mildred no never mind and pressed her way. Joe Kellum put it out in the streets that Missionary was "one of them thespian women" and had a sweet thing in St. Louie. This was a boldfaced lie cause Missionary didn't know a living or dead soul in that city.

The first time Missionary knocked on the door to the mobile home, Lou wondered what in the hell did this old woman want. She wasn't in no mood for no he say, she say shit, nor was she ready for another Jesus sermon. And she wasn't gonna put up with no interrogation, not today.

Mary jumped up to tidy things, though the house was clean as a church.

The smell of the cornbread came in before Missionary Porter did. "Thought you sweet girls would want some of my bread. There's a pound of butter in it."

Lou was softened by her seventy year old face. "Thank you, ma'am," Mary said taking the bread to the kitchenette.

Missionary Porter continued, "I'm glad to find ya'll home. I didn't have your number to call. I hope you don't think I ain't polite cause my mother raised me right."

"That's alright, Mrs. Porter," Mary said.

The only one that befriended them was Missionary Porter who didn't care what they was doing. They was Jesus' children and she didn't pay the people in Cotsville no mind.

"Call me, Missionary, baby, that would mean all the world to me."

None of them could think of a word to say, so they sat there, the fan whirring, and the ball game playing quietly on the radio.

"Can I offer you some lemonade, Missionary?" Lou asked. "Yes, baby, My whistle is a little dry; I could appreciate that now. Is that made from that resubstituted stuff or the real thing?"

"It's the real thing," Mary offered, trying to comfort.

They sat and sipped and each stared in a different direction. After about twenty minutes, Missionary pulled herself from the chair and headed home. The rest of the night was full of expectancy as if something had not come out or been said. Lou stayed up late warring inside. Mary went on to bed but the covers entangled her like two great arms and shook her restless. They were scared to touch the cornbread. Mary finally broke down and Lou ate some from her mouth. It was the best they'd ever tasted.

Missionary knocked seven days later,

mopping her forehead with a hanky that had lace all around the rim. "Girls, I'm glad I could get back to see you. Aren't you glad?"

"Yes," Mary said smiling, giving into the old woman.

Lou just nodded in affirmation. The visit was easier. Missionary Porter asked them if they wanted to come to revival to hear the Reverend C.W. Gillespie preach. They declined not because they didn't want to go, but because they had tickets to the show at the university theater that weekend.

Missionary left after thumbing through their many photographs and giving Mary plenty of medicine advice, like putting an onion in your sock when you have a fever, laying on the Bible to stop a headache, and two teaspoons of white vinegar for each quart of water would beat any woman's disease.

Still the air was full. They shared another heavy night. Lou neither Mary went to work the next morning. They thought maybe Missionary Porter was bringing spirits in or working roots on them; the strangeness of this new relationship was a strain.

Three days later the old woman returned. This time with a sweet potato pie still warm from the oven. When she handed it over, Mary felt like she was receiving a just-born baby in a bunting. They cut into it quickly. Lou savored her portion like a woman's breast. Mary was careful not to drop a crumb and even Missionary, who baked these weekly, had to confess she had put a hurting on that pie. After eating, they sighed and sat still. Missionary could be heard rolling an ice cube around in her mouth and crushing it between her dentures.

Someone had to speak, so she did. "Baby girls, you all know I'm a sanctified woman."

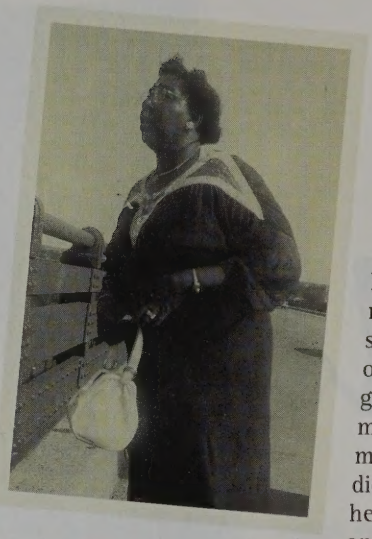
They affirmed with a nod.

"And you know I'm water-baptized, holy ghost-filled, and running for my life."

They believed it was true.

"Something I got to say, been wanting to say it since I been in your place. I wouldn't tell you nothing wrong. I asked God to give me the words to say. Lou got sour right off cause she knew what was coming. Why did this old woman have to destroy this evening with a sermon, a testimony, a reprimand. She had heard them all. Lou wanted to make the woman quiet up, fill her with more pie, but Mary moved a little closer to her companion and one slight touch stilled the waters. The confession began.

"When I was you age, Mary, I knew a woman name Margaret. She had hair white as a cotton flower and light black skin. And if you'll pardon me, Miss Lou, there wasn't nothing woman about her 'cept the hint of red lipstick she always wore. I don't know why I was drawn to her, but I truly was. She learned me so many things about God and about myself. I don't think I knew anything about myself till I met Margaret. Don't get me wrong; I knew God, but me, I didn't know about me. She learn me that I got every element inside me. I got a shower and I got a fire. I got a wind and I got an earth.



'Don't tell things of understanding to a fool.' That's what Margaret used to say. People in Cotsville think with a carnal mind, not a spirit one, remember that.

I believe God sent her to me. She was an evangelist, who had made up in her mind from the time she was eleven years old that she was gonna live without men and from the moment I met her, I did too. I used to make her sweet 'tayta pie and she'd read me the Bible. I ain't never heard nothing like it. Seem like all those folks in the Bible just got up and walked when she read to me. We'd sit and she'd vision this great ministry she would have. It come to true, I know, cause I traveled with her for fifteen years. The last stop was here in Cotsville where after a Sunday evening service, she died in my arms."

The silence in the room got so deep and wide. Mary craved to hold Lou's hand, as Missionary began rocking back and forth, tears brimming but never falling from her eyes. Lou left for the bathroom. When she returned Missionary was finishing her lemonade. The old woman kissed both of their hands and turned to leave. As she remembered, she paused.

"What I told ya'll is nothing to tell others. That's just a present for the two of you. 'Don't tell things of understanding to a fool.' That's what Margaret used to say. People in Cotsville think with a carnal mind, not a spirit one, remember that. Half the people sending folks to hell is going themselves; hell's gonna be so full, you're gonna need a reservation to get in. I love you girls so much, not just because you Jesus' children, but because you done learn how to suffer for what you want. God sees and knows."

When the door latched behind her, Mary and Lou wrapped themselves together and mixed their tears.

Missionary Porter came back often, but this was the visit they never talked about again.

Gladys Bentley (1907-1960)

Gladys Bentley lit up cafe society in the 1920s and '30s singing bawdy lyrics based on popular tunes of the day. Dressed in top hat and tails, Bentley put on the ritz in Harlem's "Jungle Alley"—a strip of clubs between Lenox and Seventh Avenues on 133rd Street. She performed at the most famous gay-oriented club of the era—Harry Hansberry's Clam House, a speakeasy also on 133rd Street. According to Eric Garber in an article on the Jazz Age in Harlem, "Bentley, a masculine, dark-skinned lesbian, performed all night long in a white tuxedo and top hat... Langston Hughes called her an amazing exhibition of musical energy." Eslanda Goode Robeson, wife of actor Paul Robeson, gushed to a friend, "Gladys Bentley is grand! I've heard her three nights and will never be the same." Educator Harold Jackman wrote to his friend Countee Cullen, "When Gladys sings 'St. James Infirmary,' it makes you weep your heart out."

In her act she openly and riotously flirted with women in the audience and often had a chorus line of men backing her. Bentley parlayed her talent and notoriety into a Park Avenue apartment, servants, and a beautiful car.

Alas, things fall apart. Prohibition sent her white clientele back downtown to new speakeasies and the Depression drew the final curtain on an era when white society went to Harlem in diamonds and furs. Bentley left New York for Los Angeles where she performed sporadically. Fearing the results of McCarthyism and succumbing to a society that had become harsher toward gays, Bentley, in 1950, wrote an article for *Ebony* entitled "I Am a Woman Again," in which she claimed to have cured her lesbianism by way of female hormone treatments. A decade later, she was about to be ordained as a minister when she died of influenza in 1960 at the age of fifty-two. She had fought the good fight for lesbians. In the end had she truly changed? Only Gladys Bentley really knows.

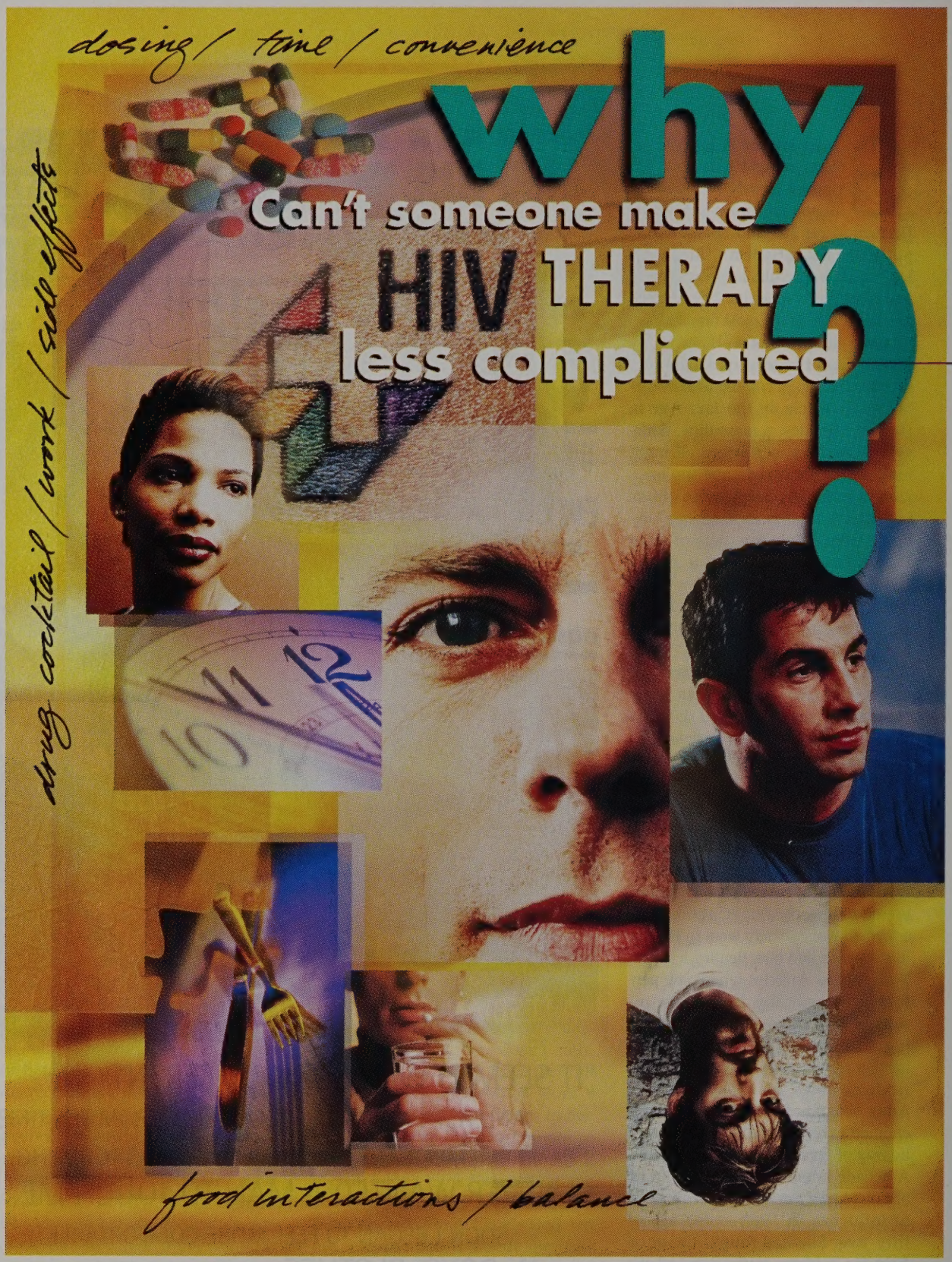
- Phil Petrie

PHOTO COURTESY BLACK PATTI RESEARCH

A LESBIAN WHO SANG THE BLUES

"IT SEEMS I WAS BORN DIFFERENT. AT LEAST, I ALWAYS THOUGHT SO.... FROM THE TIME I CAN REMEMBER ANYTHING, EVEN AS I WAS TODDLING, I NEVER WANTED A MAN TO TOUCH ME... SOON I BEGAN TO FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE IN BOYS' CLOTHES THAN IN DRESSES."

Gladys Bentley, *Ebony 1950*


dosing / time / convenience
why
Can't someone make
HIV THERAPY
less complicated
?
drug cocktail / work / side effects
food interactions / balance

someone just did!

Once Daily

SUSTIVA™

efavirenz

New SUSTIVA™ is the first HIV drug approved to be taken once-a-day as part of your combination therapy. Just take three 200 mg capsules together once daily, with or without food; high fat meals should be avoided. Your doctor may suggest taking SUSTIVA at bedtime to reduce any side effects you may experience.

SUSTIVA, an NNRTI*, must be used in combination with other HIV drugs.

SUSTIVA is tough on HIV. It reduces the amount of virus in your blood and increases the number of CD4 cells. SUSTIVA can even be used in young children, 3 years of age or older. This is based on results from controlled clinical trials at 24 weeks. Presently, there are no results from controlled clinical trials showing the long-term effects of SUSTIVA.

SUSTIVA has manageable side effects. Most side effects are mild to moderate and can be managed. The most significant side effects associated with SUSTIVA therapy have been nervous system symptoms (dizziness, trouble sleeping, drowsiness, trouble concentrating and/or abnormal dreams) and rash. These usually subside within the first two to four weeks of treatment. In a small number of patients, rash may be serious. Taking SUSTIVA at bedtime may help make nervous system symptoms less noticeable.

Pregnancy should be avoided in women receiving SUSTIVA because birth defects have been seen in primates dosed with SUSTIVA. Barrier contraception should always be used in combination with other methods of contraception.

Talk to your doctor when you start taking SUSTIVA. SUSTIVA may change the effect of other medicines (including ones for HIV). Always tell your doctor if you are taking, starting or changing any prescription or non-prescription medicine when taking SUSTIVA. Your doctor may change your medicines or change their dose. You should discuss your prior medical conditions (such as mental illness, substance abuse, hepatitis, etc.) with your doctor before taking SUSTIVA.

We know that coping with HIV is difficult enough. Your treatment doesn't have to be. Ask your doctor about SUSTIVA. For more important information see the next page for Patient Information about SUSTIVA.

New For HIV

Finally, a once daily medication to treat HIV.

SUSTIVA. It's about time.

www.sustiva.com

*NNRTI - non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor.

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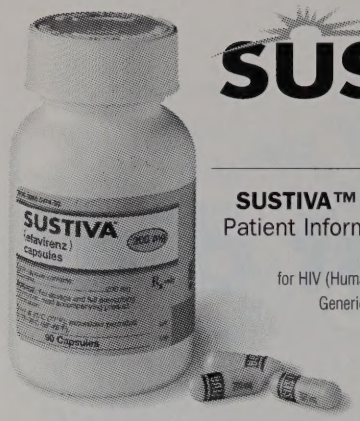

Once Daily

SUSTIVA™

efavirenz

SUSTIVA™ (efavirenz) capsules

Patient Information about SUSTIVA*

(sus-TEE-vah)

for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection

Generic name: efavirenz (eh-FAH-vih-rehnz)

Please read this information before you start taking SUSTIVA. Read it again each time you refill your prescription, in case there is any new information. Don't treat this leaflet as your only source of information about SUSTIVA. Always discuss SUSTIVA with your doctor when you start taking your medicine and at every visit. You should remain under a doctor's care when using SUSTIVA. You should not change or stop treatment without first talking to your doctor.

What is SUSTIVA?

SUSTIVA is a medicine used to help treat HIV, the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). SUSTIVA is a type of HIV drug called a "non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor" (NNRTI).

How does SUSTIVA work?

SUSTIVA works by lowering the amount of HIV in the blood (called "viral load"). SUSTIVA must be taken with other anti-HIV medicines. When taken with other anti-HIV medicines, SUSTIVA has been shown to reduce viral load and increase the number of CD4 cells (a type of immune cell in blood). SUSTIVA may not have these effects in every patient.

Does SUSTIVA cure HIV or AIDS?

SUSTIVA is not a cure for HIV or AIDS. People taking SUSTIVA may still develop other infections associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important that you remain under the care of your doctor.

Does SUSTIVA reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

SUSTIVA has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others. Continue to practice safe sex, and do not use or share dirty needles.

How should I take SUSTIVA?

- The dose of SUSTIVA for adults is 600 mg (three 200 mg capsules, taken together) once a day by mouth. The dose of SUSTIVA for children may be lower (see **Can children take SUSTIVA?**).
- Take SUSTIVA at the same time each day. You should take SUSTIVA at bedtime during the first few weeks or if you have side effects, such as dizziness or trouble concentrating (see **What are the possible side effects of SUSTIVA?**).
- Swallow SUSTIVA with water, juice, milk or soda. You may take SUSTIVA with or without meals; however, SUSTIVA should not be taken with a high fat meal.
- Do not miss a dose of SUSTIVA. If you forget to take SUSTIVA, take the missed dose right away. If you do miss a dose, do not double the next dose. Carry on with your regular dosing schedule. If you need help in planning the best times to take your medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- Take the exact amount of SUSTIVA your doctor prescribes. Never change the dose on your own. Do not stop this medicine unless your doctor tells you to stop.
- When your SUSTIVA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to SUSTIVA and become harder to treat.

Can children take SUSTIVA?

Yes, children who are able to swallow capsules can take SUSTIVA. Rash may be a serious problem in some children. Tell your child's doctor right away if you notice rash or any other side effects while your child is taking SUSTIVA. The dose of SUSTIVA for children may be lower than the dose for adults. Capsules containing lower doses of SUSTIVA are available. Your child's doctor will determine the right dose based on your child's weight.

Who should not take SUSTIVA?

Do not take SUSTIVA if you are allergic to SUSTIVA or any of its ingredients.

What other medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my doctor?

Talk to your doctor right away if you:

- Are pregnant or want to become pregnant
- Are breast-feeding
- Have problems with your liver, or have had hepatitis
- Start or change any medicine
- Have side effects while taking SUSTIVA (efavirenz)
- Have a history of mental illness, substance or alcohol abuse

What are the possible side effects of SUSTIVA?

Many patients have dizziness, trouble sleeping, drowsiness, trouble concentrating, and/or unusual dreams a few hours after starting treatment with SUSTIVA. These feelings may be less noticeable if you take SUSTIVA at bedtime. They also tend to go away after you've taken the medicine for a few weeks. Rarely, patients have more serious side effects that may affect mood or ability to think clearly. These side effects occur more often in patients with a history of mental illness or substance abuse. Tell your doctor promptly if any of these side effects continue or if they bother you. There is the possibility that these symptoms may be more severe if SUSTIVA is used with alcohol or mood altering (street) drugs. You should avoid driving or operating machinery if you are having these side effects.

One of the most common side effects is rash. These rashes usually go away without any change in treatment. In a small number of patients, rash may be serious. If you develop a rash, call your doctor promptly.

Other common side effects include tiredness, upset stomach, vomiting, and diarrhea. However, this is not a complete list of side effects reported with SUSTIVA when taken with other anti-HIV drugs. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about side effects. Your doctor can discuss a more complete list of side effects with you.

Please contact your doctor immediately before stopping SUSTIVA because of side effects. Tell your doctor or other healthcare provider if you notice any side effects while taking SUSTIVA.

What about birth control, pregnancy, or breast-feeding?

Women should not become pregnant while taking SUSTIVA. Birth defects have been seen in animals treated with SUSTIVA. It is not known whether this could happen in humans. You should use a condom or diaphragm in addition to other methods of birth control while taking SUSTIVA. Inform your doctor immediately if you are pregnant. If you want to become pregnant, talk to your doctor. Do not take SUSTIVA if you are breast-feeding. Talk to your doctor if you are breast-feeding your baby.

Can I take other medicines with SUSTIVA?

SUSTIVA may change the effect of other medicines (including ones for HIV). Your doctor may change your medicines or change their doses. For this reason, it is very important to:

- Let all your doctors and pharmacists know that you take SUSTIVA.
- Tell your doctors and pharmacists about all medicines you take. This includes those you buy over-the-counter and herbal or natural remedies.

Bring all your medicines when you see a doctor, or make a list of their names, how much you take, and how often you take them. This will give your doctor a complete picture of the medicines you use. Then he or she can decide the best approach for your situation.

The following medicines may cause serious and life-threatening side effects when taken with SUSTIVA. You should not take any of these medicines while taking SUSTIVA:**

- Hismanal® (astemizole)
- Propulsid® (cisapride)
- Versed® (midazolam)
- Halcion® (triazolam)
- Ergot medications (for example, Wigraine® and Cafergot®)

The following medicines may need to be changed or have their dose changed when taken with SUSTIVA:**

- Crixivan® (indinavir)
- Fortovase® (saquinavir)
- Biaxin® (clarithromycin)

How should I keep SUSTIVA?

SUSTIVA is available as 50 mg, 100 mg, and 200 mg capsules.

Keep SUSTIVA at room temperature (77°F) in the bottle given to you by your pharmacist. The temperature can range from 59°-86°F.

Keep SUSTIVA out of the reach of children.

How can I learn more about SUSTIVA?

Talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider if you have questions about either SUSTIVA or HIV. For additional information you can visit the SUSTIVA website at http://www.sustiva.com.

This medicine was prescribed for your particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep SUSTIVA out of the reach of children. If you suspect that more than the prescribed dose of this medicine has been taken, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

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DuPont Pharmaceuticals
Wilmington, DE 19880
Issued September, 1998

Remembering Reggie Williams

PHOTO BY RON SINGLETON

AIDS and black gay activist Reggie Williams, who in the early 1980s "was one of the first to recognize that information and prevention efforts were not reaching the gay and bisexual black community," died Feb. 7 of AIDS-related complications at age 47. A celebration of his life will be held at San Francisco City Hall on his birthday, April 29. The San Francisco Chronicle reports that Williams, who was HIV positive for the past 13 years, was founding director of the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention, which worked to raise [HIV awareness and Prevention for Gay and Bisexual men of all colors]

In 1980, Williams founded the National Association of Black and White Men Together to, purge the white gay community of its bias against black gays. In December of 1989, he took his messages to the streets and led a protest in Washington, DC, "demanding more federal funds for AIDS research, as well as food, shelter, and health care for AIDS patients around the nation" (Pimsleur, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/15/99). Williams' friend and colleague Phill Wilson said, "What he said is that it was unhealthy to compartmentalize our identities. There was not ever a discrete point where one's blackness ended and one's gayness began. What we all understood, what Reggie understood, is that AIDS really was a symptom. It was a symptom, a metaphor, for what happens in the absence of self-affirming community and identity. Reggie was an AIDS pioneer" (Wright, *Washington Blade*, 2/12/99). Many African American Gay and Lesbian activist attribute their work, dedication, and inspiration to the tutelage of Reggie Williams.

We will sorely miss you Reggie.

- Edited by Maurice Franklin

COMPILED AN D PHOTOGRAPHED
BY RON SINGLETON

Does your mama know that you're gay?

Everyone's got a story about how their parents found out about their being in the life. For those of you who think your parents don't know "because you've never discussed it," get over it! All parents KNOW. They may not WANT to know but they do. I mean come on, you're thirty years old, still have a "roommate," and seem completely uninterested in the opposite sex. Pa-leeeze! Not only does your Mama know, but the rest of your family knows too. Just for the record we asked a few people about their stories!

MARTINA DOWNEY, 35+ SALES REPRESENTATIVE, PUBLISHING INDUSTRY, BROOKLYN, NY

"Yes, my parents do know I am lesbian. I told them in 1982. They kind of asked me if I were gay, and I said, 'yeah'. They kind of got upset, and threw me out of the house. Now we're sort of stand offish, but in a neutral zone.

There's no animosity, I've forgiven them. They've evolved in some ways, but they still can't make that change, that break with themselves I'm still hoping for. I'm still working towards that, but I know that my church family is my real family, the community that I belong to is my real family."

ASABI BAYE DAVIS, 43, PAINTER/CONSTRUCTION WORKER, IRVINGTON, NJ

"Yes my parents know. I really didn't tell them, they asked my sister when I was about eighteen years old and I left home and moved in with my first girlfriend. But I came up in a family where I have two gay aunts, so it was always there in the family and it really wasn't a problem."

TRINA LAMB, 28, AGENCY SERVICE REP, BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD, IRVINGTON, NJ

"Yes, my mother found out by accident when I was approximately thirteen years old. She came into the bathroom and saw me kissing my girlfriend.

After that experience, however, and the shock, she was quite comfortable with it and said 'as long as you're happy, I totally support you and I love you because you're my daughter!'"

"who said that?"

"We must open the wounds of slavery and oppression to heal them and to truly bring liberty and justice and the pursuit of happiness to everyone, including those of different sexual orientations, and to finally unite ALL of the people as God's family."

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, speaking at Ebeneezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA.

"People who are gay haven't chosen their sexual orientation. It must be a crazy person who chooses to be gay in such a homophobic world. Let's work for real tolerance."

—Archbishop Tutu, receiving an honorary doctorate from Bishop's University, in an English-speaking enclave east of Montreal.

McNamara

"Magic Johnson is a dangerous image because he leads the public to believe that you can take 3 HIV cocktails a day and have a healthy normal life opening up movie theatres, and hosting T.V. shows."

"Large churches are like drive-in movies theaters. Everyone is watching the movie but sitting in their own car with the windows up so no one talks to each other. The individual does not become responsible to their church. Heterosexuals in Black churches are in the closet about HIV and so it has taken a toll on their children. I would like to pass out condoms in the collection plate!" "Brothers and Sisters need to bring their sexuality to the forefront and invade the Black church about accepting their homosexual congregation."

—Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, author, in a keynote speech at the 12th National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Conference, Atlanta, GA

ATTENTION BROTHAS AND SISTAHS!
Have you received an Award, Promotion, Commitment, New Baby?
Send your announcements with a recent photo to:
Venus Magazine
P.O. Box 150
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706

Outstanding!

BRENDA CRAWFORD has been selected as the1999 Outstanding Woman Of The Year In Community Service in Alameda County, CA by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, The Commission On the Status Of Women and The Alameda County Health Care Foundation. She will be permanently inducted into the Alameda County Women's Hall Of Frame. This is the first time that this award has been given to an out, African American Lesbian.

"I am humbled, and honored by this award," said Crawford from her office in Oakland. "What I think this really means is that the African American LGBT community in Alameda County, primarily in Oakland has been working for years to increase our visibility, and political involvement, and some of that work is finally starting to pay off. Most of us just want what all Americans want, and are entitled to; full inclusion, and protection under the law."

MARY F. MORTEN was appointed by the The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) to its Board of Directors. A native of Chicago, Morten has a long history of work within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and progressive communities. In 1997, Mayor Richard Daley appointed Morten to the position of Director and Liaison for the Advisory Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues, a position she still holds. She was the first African-American president of the Chicago chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and was inducted in 1996 into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame for her outstanding contributions to that community. She has also served as a host on Chicago's Lesbigay Radio.

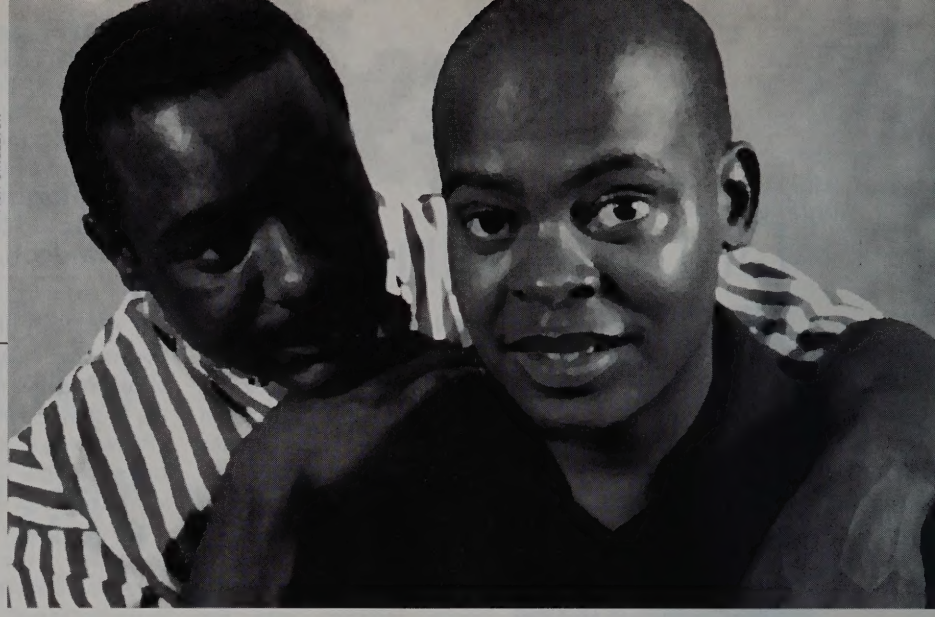
"I have always been a fan and a follower of GLAAD's work," said Morten. "I'm excited to join the national board, where I will be able to bring the perspective of community activism and government advocacy on behalf of the lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender community. Ensuring a diverse and inclusive representation of our community in the media is of primary importance to me. I look forward to working to bring GLAAD's vital work to the attention of our colleagues in Chicago and throughout the Midwest."

MS. RAMONA BRIDGES, was promoted to Deputy Director of Youth Services department at the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, after working as a Youth Advocate since 1995. The Youth Services department of the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center is the only organization in the city offering transitional living and educational programs, as well as health and emergency services designed especially for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth. Ms. Bridges holds a BA in Psychology from Pomona College in Clarement, CA. A native of Austin, Texas, she has lived in L.A. for twenty years.

MS. KATHRYN WHITE, was recently promoted to Director of Special Events for the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center. This is her fourth promotion in the four and a half years she has worked for the Gay and Lesbian Center. Ms. White will be responsible for such signature events as "Black Satin: A Tribute to the Legendary Female Jazz and Blues Singers" and the annual "Women's Night," the largest lesbian dinner and dance in the world. Special Events are expected to raise more than one million dollars for vital social, educational and health services at the L.A. Gay and Lesbian center in the next year. Ms. White also serves on the Board of Directors for the Alcoholism Center for Women and, when she has a moment, she enjoys painting and spending time with her talking parrot, Mekeeda, and cat, Nunu. Ms. White is a native of L.A.

CARL DE VINE, I was honored with an Unsung Hero award for his continuous and tireless effort on behalf of people with AIDS. The Unsung Hero award was awarded to De Vine, by 100 Black Men of America, the National Council of Negro Women, and the National Black Caucus. The Unsung Hero award recipients are selected by the Center for Disease Control. Carl DeVine is a true unsung hero and a man committed to the fight against AIDS.

He said, "I didn't want to do it (fight AIDS), but if I didn't, who would?"



RON SINGLETON

Sex Talk

Q: I have been separated from my lover of three years, for several months. He claimed that I was not as sexually and emotionally expressive as he would like. He interpreted this, to some extent, as representing a lack of love on my part, and he left the relationship. I have worked on myself with this issue and feel that I'm ready to fully express how very much I do love him—sexually and emotionally. I have wanted a second chance, but now I'm not sure. My problem is this. My best friend of twelve years knows I want to return to my ex-lover. He has revealed to me that my ex-lover has made overt sexual advances towards him and several other men in our circle. This happened while we were still together. Is my ex-lover untrustworthy or was this my fault because of my sexual problems?

SIGNED,
GUILTY AND UNTRUSTING

A: Your situation brings up many questions. Did sexual behaviors actually occur between your best friend and ex-lover? And, did they occur with "the circle of men"? Was "safe" sex involved? Did your best friend have sexual feelings towards you? However, I shall attempt to remain focused on the most relevant issues. First, congratulations on taking charge of yourself and improving in those much-needed areas. No need, however, to feel guilty. You did not produce your partner's untrustworthy sexual behavior. He is responsible for his behavior. The two of you were, indeed, having sexual issues. But that your partner chose to solve these outside of the relationship, speaks of commitment and fidelity issues more than sexual issues. The question you might prefer to ask of yourself is "Can I trust this wonderful vulnerable gift of sexual and emotional expression to someone who is not committed to me?" I suspect this might be the cause of your issues from the onset.

Geanie Bond is a licensed marriage and family therapist in Atlanta, GA. Contact her at 404-256-6709.

Ask Marian

Q: I am 39 years old and have been with my partner for over 8 years. I have built my career and now I want to have a baby. The problem is I keep talking about it but feel stuck. I am leaning towards having a biological child. I would have artificial insemination. However, I am passionate about family history and my cultural heritage and it is important to me to know the family roots of my child's father. I don't know any men who would be willing or suitable as a donor. Plus, my partner is lukewarm to the whole idea. She has three children of her own. I guess I don't want to go through all this feeling like I am on my own. Family is everything to me.

SIGNED LUKE WARM

A: What a wonderful desire you have, to have baby! The concerns you bring up are deeply personal and are about what you want and how much you want it in a world whose dominant model of parenting is biologically-centered. Considered all your options if you choose the biological route: artificial insemination through a known or unknown donor, in-vitro fertilization (you can have your partner's egg fertilized then implanted in your own womb), or surrogacy (your fertilized egg is implanted in another woman's womb). Costs can soar depending on the method. There are legal considerations to all these options including co-parenting agreements, donor-recipient agreements, second-parent adoption, and guardianship. Living your life as a lesbian is probably a departure from your dominant cultural roots. Consider reframing your concern about losing family roots by recognizing that cultures throughout the world prescribe that children take their name and their parentage from their mother. Find out all your partner's fears and get counseling if you are still stuck.

Below is a list of organizations that may be able to address your questions and put you in touch with information and support. Remember, by not choosing to act, you make a choice.

Love Makes a Family Inc.
P.O. Box 11694
Portland OR 97211
(503) 228-3892

Center Kids, The Family Project
Lesbian/Gay Community Services Ctr
208 West 13th St.
New York, N.Y. 10011
(212) 620-7310

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force
Family Issues Project
1517 U St. NW
Washington D.C. 20009
(202) 332-6483
Lesbian & Gay Parenting Project

c/o Lyon-Martin Clinic
2480 Mission Street, Suite 214
San Francisco CA 94110
(415) 525-7312

Let's TALK ABOUT SEX

and a possible vaccine for HIV!

Sexually active, HIV negative men needed for an HIV vaccine research study. You cannot get AIDS from the vaccine.

For information call toll free: (877) 6-VAXGEN

(877) 682-9436

Photo: E. Kotila, Berkeley © 1999

ArtsTour 2000 Puts African Diaspora LGBT Artists Center Stage

Planning is already underway for a historic national tour of black l/g/b/t writers, visual and performing artists. ArtsTour 2000, is the brainchild of publisher/author Alaric Wendell Blair (An End of Innocence, a journey into the life, Mirage Publishing 1998), and stems from a recent gathering of black writers at the Behind Our Masks Conference in Washington, D.C. in October 1998.

The tour, which welcomes new and established artists from all disciplines, will celebrate the arts and letters of l/g/b/t of African descent by creating venues for their work and will serve to offer greater visibility of black queer artists. Among the many artists nationwide who have already pledged their time and service to this groundbreaking project, are James Earl Hardy (B-Boy Blues), Sharon Bridgeforth (Bull Jean Stories), Kathleen Morris (Speaking In Whispers), G. Winston James (Other-Countries Anthologies), Lisa Moore (Redbone Press/Does Your Mama Know), Robert E. Penn (Gay Men's Wellness Guide), Ricc Rollins (Like Breathing), Dwayne Carter (The Best Man), Lorenzo C. Robertson (Me, Myself & I). and filmmaker Aishah Simmons (NO!) The tour is also supported by such organizations as Venus Magazine, Clique Magazine, Ishai Books and the National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum.

Representatives from ArtsTour will be on hand at the Unity V Conference in Chicago April 16-18 and the 2nd Annual BOOK HOUSE CAFE Reader/Writer/Publisher Workshop Book Signing, which will be held in Oakland on June 19, 1999.

Additionally, information can be obtained by sending an email to: ArtsTour2000@egroups.com.

Corrections Some names of individuals appearing in photos on page 33, Vol.4 No.4 taken at Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation were spelled incorrectly. The proper spelling of those named are photo #5: (l to r) Gliza Mullen of AALUSC, Tracy Little, Collette Carter of AALUSC; photo #7: Nelcia Clarence, Kim Ford of AALUSC, Dulce Reyes of Las Buenas Amigas.

The Blackstripe, www.blackstripe.com your web address for information and news for and about same-gender-loving, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people of African descent. Features the Blacklist, a listing of notable sgl/lgbt people of African descent, www.blackstripe.com/blacklist.

Free Personals
Free Websites
Books
Flowers
Music
Gifts
Links
News

Make the Blackstripe your site for news and information about you!
www.blackstripe.com

Collective Voices

What do you call 300 dynamic black lesbians from around the country who come together for enriching dialogue and inspirational performances? CLOAVE, Collective Lesbians of African-Descent Voices Everywhere! In it's third year, the group has planned an exceptional event that is 'must' for sistahs attending Black Pride in Washington, D.C. in May. Invited panelists include Barbara Kigozi, Vidoegrapher & Photographer; Denise Bentley, Associate Director of Boston's Fenway clinic; Carlene Cheatum, Public Advocate for the D.C. Mayor's office; Nadine Smith, Founder and Executive Director of Equality Florida; Pastor Wanda Floyd, Founder and Pastor of Imani Temple, Dr. Andrea Sullivan, Naturopath and Homeopathic expert, and Charlene Cothran, Publisher of Venus Magazine.

Performances are scheduled by She-Black, a Canadian modern dance troupe; Dr. Kofi Adoma, violinist and activist; Kimberly Pernell, New York-based performance artist and entertainment editor for Venus Magazine; RAH, soul lyricist and an drumming group called AKWABA, bringing an Afri-Am-Native Drummawomyn vibe! Rebecca A. Helem, president and lead organizer is excited to present the event. "Energy is so running high that we predict our heaviest turn out ever." The event takes place on Saturday May 29, 1999 at 12:00 pm in Washington, DC at MCC 474 Ridge Street, NW during Black Pride weekend. For information call 202-544-9298.

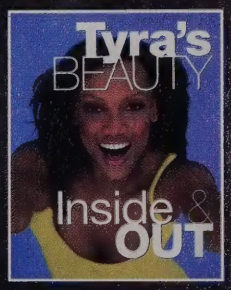
PHOTO BY TINA PAUL

Tyra Banks

TITTY COMMITTEE

"The media and the general public seem obsessed with my breast. Are they real or are they fake? When ever I go to the GYN for a breast exam, I tell her, "I wish you could televise this so the whole world could see I'm all natural." I used to joke and laugh and say the rumors didn't bother me, but they really do hurt my feelings. No matter what I say, people will believe what they want to believe, and I've just got to learn to live with that."

Those candid words from Supermodel Tyra Banks, are excerpt from her new book Beauty Inside and Out. The leggy diva honestly discusses her beauty secrets and rituals about hair, skin, make-up, fitness, dating pitfalls, family issues and personal heath. In one chapter she shares her personal experiences about overcoming poor self-esteem as a 'super bony' pre-teen. Her addiction to junk food early in her modeling career once caused her to "almost faint on the runway. That's when I knew I had to change the way I ate." The triumph of her commitment to a healthy lifestyle is evidenced by her flawless appearance and overwhelming success. Beauty Inside and Out is hip, colorful, fun, and easy to read. It's great information for anyone but particularly makes the perfect gift for that young lady in your family who can't wait to be all grown-up.



Empowerment
Black On Black Love
Self-Love
Community & Personal Affirmation
Celebrating Our Way Of Loving
In Dialogue
In Communion

TM *The SGL symbol

BWX

Black Womyn's Xchange

Black Same-Gender-Loving (SGL) Sistahs,
Loving Themselves In Their Own Image

BWX gathers weekly, 7:00 p.m. at the AMASSI Health, Wellness and
Cultural Affirmation Center in Los Angeles
For More Information Call 310.419.1969
Ask for Habiba

new for HIV

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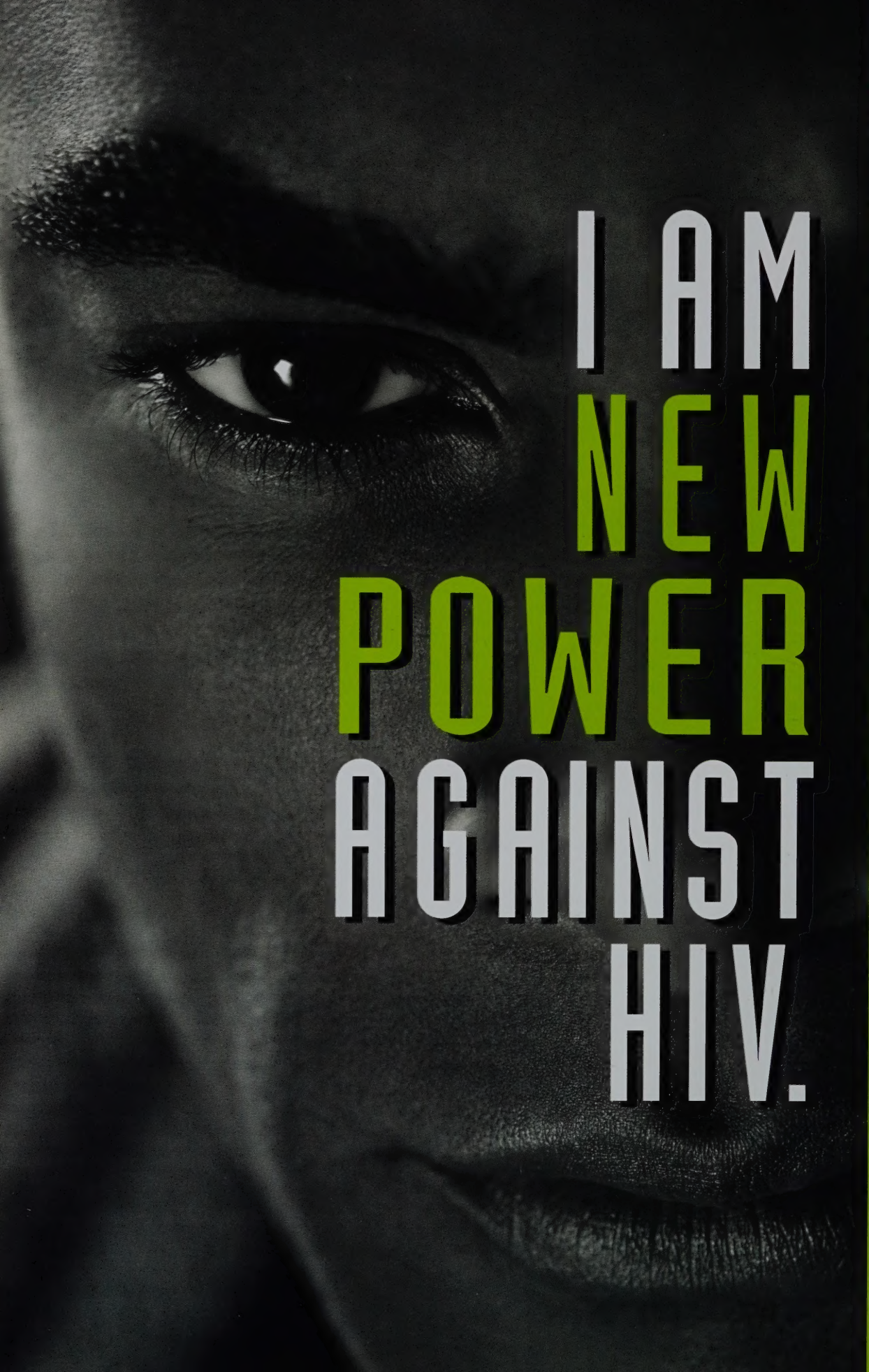
I AM
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POWER
AGAINST
HIV.

Talk to your healthcare professional about ZIAGEN. Or call 1-888-TALK-2-GW (1-888-825-5249).

I am new

Ziagen™

abacavir sulfate 300 mg tablets

I drive down viral load

Most people who took ZIAGEN with two other nucleoside analogues as their first combination regimen achieved undetectable viral load through 16 weeks.* ZIAGEN does not cure HIV infection/AIDS or prevent passing HIV to others. It's not known whether taking ZIAGEN will slow the progress of HIV disease or help you live longer.

I am two pills a day, with or without food

The easy dosing of ZIAGEN—just one tablet in the morning and one at night, with or without food—simplifies your combination therapy.

I give you new treatment options

ZIAGEN is powerful enough to achieve undetectable viral load when used in initial combination therapy*—for example, ZIAGEN + COMBIVIR® (lamivudine 150 mg/zidovudine 300 mg) Tablets—and may preserve future treatment options. ZIAGEN can be effective in patients who have used anti-HIV drugs before, but the effects are less.

Important safety information

About 5% of patients (5 in 100) who take ZIAGEN have a hypersensitivity reaction (a serious allergic reaction) that may result in death. IF YOU HAVE SKIN RASH OR TWO OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SETS OF SYMPTOMS, STOP TAKING ZIAGEN AND CALL YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY: fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain, severe tiredness, achiness, or generally ill feeling. A written list of these symptoms is on the Warning Card and Medication Guide provided by your pharmacist. You should carry the Warning Card with you.

If you must stop treatment with ZIAGEN because you have had this serious reaction, NEVER TAKE ZIAGEN AGAIN. If you take ZIAGEN again after you have had this serious reaction, WITHIN HOURS you may experience LIFE-THREATENING symptoms that may include LOWERING OF YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE OR DEATH.

A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with HIV drugs of this type.

Most side effects were mild to moderate; the most common side effects were nausea, vomiting, malaise or fatigue, headache, diarrhea, and loss of appetite. Most of these side effects did not cause people to stop taking ZIAGEN.

*71% (62/87) of patients taking ZIAGEN with lamivudine + zidovudine in this clinical trial had viral load undetectable below 400 copies/mL using the Roche Amplicor HIV-1 MONITOR® Test.

Please see important information for ZIAGEN and COMBIVIR on adjacent pages.

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Printed in USA. ABC042R0 March 1999

www.ZIAGEN.com

Glaxo Wellcome HIV
A division of Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
Web site: www.glaxowellcome.com

MEDICATION GUIDE

ZIAGEN™ (z-EYE-uh-jen) (abacavir sulfate) Tablets and Oral Solution

Established name: abacavir (uh-BACK-ah-veer) sulfate tablets and oral solution

In order to take Ziagen safely, you should read all of the information in this Medication Guide each time you fill your prescription for Ziagen.

What is the most important information I should know about Ziagen?

About 5% of patients (5 in 100) who take Ziagen have a hypersensitivity reaction (a serious allergic reaction) **that may result in death.** If you have **skin rash** or two or more of the following sets of symptoms, you may be having this kind of reaction:

- **fever**
- **nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain**
- **severe tiredness, achiness, or generally ill feeling**

A written list of these symptoms is on the Warning Card provided by your pharmacist. You should carry this Warning Card with you. **IF YOU NOTICE THESE SYMPTOMS WHILE TAKING ZIAGEN, STOP TAKING ZIAGEN AND CALL YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY.**

If you must stop treatment with Ziagen because you have had this serious reaction, **NEVER TAKE ZIAGEN AGAIN**. If you take Ziagen again after you have had this serious reaction, **WITHIN HOURS** you may experience **LIFE-THREATENING** symptoms that may include **LOWERING OF YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE OR DEATH**.

Ziagen can have other serious side effects. Be sure to read "What are the possible side effects of Ziagen?" in the section to the right.

What is Ziagen?

Ziagen is a medication used to treat HIV infection. Ziagen is taken by mouth as a tablet or a strawberry-banana flavored liquid. It belongs to a class of anti-HIV medicines called nucleoside analogue reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs). Ziagen is only proven to work when taken in combination with other anti-HIV medications. When used in combination with these other medications, Ziagen helps lower the amount of HIV found in your blood and keep your immune system as healthy as possible so that it can help fight infection. However, Ziagen does not have these effects in all patients.

Ziagen does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. At this time, there is no evidence that Ziagen will help you live longer or have fewer of the medical problems that are associated with HIV infection or AIDS. Because of this, you must be sure to be seen regularly by your health care provider.

Who should not take Ziagen?

Do not take Ziagen if you have ever had a hypersensitivity reaction (a serious allergic reaction) to Ziagen. In such cases, you should return all of your unused Ziagen to your doctor or pharmacist for proper disposal.

How should I take Ziagen?

Take Ziagen exactly as your doctor prescribes it.

The usual dosage for adults (at least 16 years of age) is one 300-mg tablet twice a day.

Adolescents and children from 3 months to 16 years of age can also take Ziagen™ (abacavir sulfate) Tablets and Oral Solution. Your doctor will tell you if the oral solution or tablet is best for your child.

Also, your child's doctor will decide the right dose based on your child's weight and age. Ziagen has not been studied in children under 3 months of age.

Ziagen can be taken with food or on an empty stomach.

To help make sure that your anti-HIV therapy is as effective as it can be, be very careful to take all of your medication exactly as your doctor prescribed it and do not skip any doses.

If you miss a dose of Ziagen, take the missed dose immediately. Then, take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time.

When your supply of Ziagen and other anti-HIV drugs starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. It is very important that you take anti-HIV drugs as prescribed by your doctor because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if one or more of the drugs is stopped, even for a short time.

What should I avoid while taking Ziagen?

Ziagen has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Continue to practice safe sex while using Ziagen. Do not use or share dirty needles.

Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking Ziagen. Ziagen has not been studied in pregnant women and the risk to the unborn child is not known.

Mothers with HIV should not breastfeed their infants because HIV in the breast milk can be passed to the infant.

What are the possible or reasonably likely side effects of Ziagen?

Some people have had a hypersensitivity reaction (a serious allergic reaction) to Ziagen, which can be fatal. Instructions on how to recognize a possible reaction, as well as what to do if such a reaction is suspected, are discussed in the section "What is the most important information I should know about Ziagen?"

The class of medicines to which Ziagen belongs (NRTIs) can cause a condition called lactic acidosis, together with an enlarged liver. In some cases, this condition can be fatal. Women are more likely than men to experience this rare but serious side effect.

Ziagen can cause other side effects. In studies, the most common side effects with Ziagen were nausea, vomiting, malaise or fatigue, headache, diarrhea, and loss of appetite. Most of these side effects did not cause people to stop taking Ziagen. This listing of side effects is not complete. Your doctor or pharmacist can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects with Ziagen. Talk to your doctor promptly about any side effects you have.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Medication Guide. Ask a health care professional about any concerns about Ziagen. Professional labeling is available to your doctor and other health care professionals. If you want more information ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the professional labeling.

GlaxoWellcome

Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

December 1998 MG - 001

This Medication Guide has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

Patient Information about COMBIVIR® (lamivudine 150 mg/zidovudine 300 mg) Tablets

for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: lamivudine/zidovudine tablets

Please read this information before you start taking COMBIVIR (pronounced KOM-bĭ-veer). Staying informed will help you to work more closely with your doctor and healthcare team to determine what is best for you. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussion with your healthcare provider. You should remain under a doctor's care when using COMBIVIR and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your healthcare provider.

What is COMBIVIR?

COMBIVIR is the brand name of a tablet that combines EPIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine tablets) [3TC®] and RETROVIR® (zidovudine) Tablets [AZT], two drugs which are used to treat HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

How does COMBIVIR work?

COMBIVIR is a combination of lamivudine (la-MIV-u-deen) and zidovudine (zī-DOHV-u-deen), two medicines (nucleoside analogues) that slow down the replication of the HIV virus. This can reduce the virus' ability to infect new cells. It may help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Lamivudine plus zidovudine when used together can have stronger (synergistic) effects against the virus. COMBIVIR is a convenient way of taking lamivudine and zidovudine. COMBIVIR should usually be taken with other anti-HIV therapy.

Will COMBIVIR work the same as EPIVIR and RETROVIR taken together?

Yes, taking one COMBIVIR Tablet twice a day is the same as taking one EPIVIR 150 mg Tablet twice a day and either two RETROVIR 100 mg Capsules three times a day or one RETROVIR 300 mg Tablet twice a day.

How should I take COMBIVIR?

Take COMBIVIR as your doctor prescribes it. The recommended dose is one COMBIVIR Tablet orally two times a day, with or without food. To help make sure you will benefit from COMBIVIR, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays."

What should I do if I miss a dose of COMBIVIR?

If you miss a dose by more than 4 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. However, if you miss a dose by less than 4 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of COMBIVIR at any one time.

Does COMBIVIR cure HIV infection or AIDS?

No, there is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking COMBIVIR may still develop infections or other illnesses associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important to remain under the care of a healthcare provider. Use of lamivudine plus zidovudine has been shown to help patients with HIV infection stay healthy and live longer.

Does COMBIVIR reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

No, COMBIVIR, as well as other HIV medications, has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take COMBIVIR?

You should not take COMBIVIR if you have had a serious allergic reaction to either lamivudine or zidovudine.

Do not take COMBIVIR at the same time as EPIVIR or RETROVIR because they also contain lamivudine and zidovudine.

Individual dosing with EPIVIR plus RETROVIR, rather than COMBIVIR, should be considered for:

- A child under 12 years of age.
- A patient who weighs less than 110 pounds.
- Anyone who requires dosage adjustments due to drug side effects or poor kidney function.

What medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my healthcare provider?

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking COMBIVIR® (lamivudine 150 mg/zidovudine 300 mg) Tablets. Ask your doctor about enrolling you in the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry: 1-800-258-4263.
- You are breastfeeding. Mothers infected with HIV should not breastfeed their infants because HIV is present in breast milk.

Also talk to your doctor about:

- Problems with your blood counts.
- Problems with your muscles.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease, such as hepatitis.

Can COMBIVIR be taken with other medications?

Yes, COMBIVIR can be taken with most medications, including most anti-HIV drugs. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about all medications, over-the-counter or prescription, that you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of COMBIVIR?

Do not rely on this summary alone for information about side effects. Your healthcare provider can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects that may be relevant to you.

The safety of COMBIVIR is not expected to be different from the safety of EPIVIR and RETROVIR given separately.

In clinical studies of lamivudine plus zidovudine, side effects occurring in 5% or more of patients included: muscle and joint pain, headache, nausea, weakness and fatigue, nasal symptoms, cough, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, neuropathy, trouble sleeping, fever or chills, loss of appetite, dizziness, abdominal pain or cramps, depression, skin rashes, and indigestion.

It's important to know that serious side effects can occur with COMBIVIR, such as a decrease in red and white blood cells and muscle damage. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with some HIV drugs, including nucleoside analogues.

For HIV-infected individuals, periodic blood tests are recommended. If certain changes occur in your laboratory results while you are taking COMBIVIR, particularly if you become anemic or if your white blood cell count falls too low, your medication may need to be adjusted; your doctor may prescribe EPIVIR plus RETROVIR separately in place of COMBIVIR.

Tell your doctor promptly about any side effects or other unusual symptoms you may experience.

Other Information

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep COMBIVIR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Like most prescription drugs, lamivudine and zidovudine were required to be tested on animals before they were allowed for human use. In animal studies with doses much higher than those used in humans, zidovudine was associated with vaginal tumors. Your healthcare provider can tell you more about how drugs are tested on animals and what the results of these tests may mean about safety for you.

How should I store COMBIVIR Tablets?

COMBIVIR Tablets may be stored at room temperature and do not require refrigeration.

This provides a summary of information about COMBIVIR. If you have any questions or concerns about COMBIVIR or HIV, talk to your healthcare provider.

Glaxo Wellcome
HIV
A division of Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
Web site: www.glaxowellcome.com

Debra Cox

Canadian born, Debra Cox, gives it all she's got whenever she's in concert. The emotionally charged diva is the first Canadian R&B artist to ever reach #1 on Billboard's R&B charts. Cox's gospel-infused voice is second to none on her record-breaking single "Nobody's Supposed to be Here" from her album "One Wish" which stayed at #1 for 13 consecutive weeks.

PHOTO BY TINA PAUL

Edward Wilkerson

Fashion Designer & Photographer

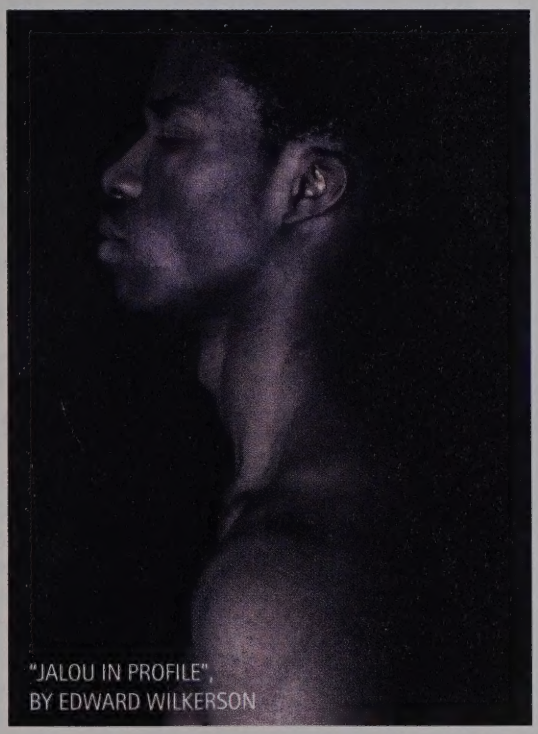
Edward Wilkerson is an artist who lives and breathes his work, literally.

From the classic yet stylized fashion to his provocative photography detailing facets of African life and artistry, Wilkerson has mesmerized anyone who has worn one of his designs or laid eyes upon his photography collections, Tribal Knowledge and Desire.

What began as a career in fashion has evolved into a life's journey for Wilkerson, a journey that would forever change the way he experienced life. In fact, Africa became the place where Edward would truly rediscover himself.

"Since Africa, my sense of color has not been the same after seeing how Mother Nature made grass such a lush color of green and the sensual blue in the sky," says a reminiscing Edward. "The air was so pure, it was a pleasure to breathe. I was so overwhelmed that I wanted to bottle it and bring it back home with me...instead, I have photographs." Welcome to Edward Wilkerson's journey to the visually beautiful.

Although the continent of Africa served as a sanctuary of rebirth for Edward, his formative years were spent in New York City. Influenced by his mother's immaculate sense of style, Edward decided at the age of ten that he wanted to become a fashion designer. While other children in his Queens neighborhood played outside, Edward surrounded himself with delicate and colorful fabrics, studied how clothing defined the body, and dreamed of one day designing couture clothing for some of the world's most stylish women.



"JALOU IN PROFILE",
BY EDWARD WILKERSON

Edward graduated from Parsons School of Design and spent three years studying the art of fashion design. In1984, Edward was well on his way to a promising career as a designer with Anne Klein & Co. where he assisted then-senior designers Donna Karan and Louise del Olio. As the high-spending wave of the '80s came to an end and the age of the Supermodel progressed, Edward moved on to the chic design house of developing silhouettes and the direction of the main Calvin Klein collection.

After more than three years with Calvin Klein, it seemed that Edward Wilkerson's career had come full circle, and he accepted the position of designer with Donna Karan for the Donna Karan Collection, which would ultimately produce items that many women all over the world consider necessary pieces of clothing and accessories for their wardrobe. He was living his childhood dream.

While Edward continued to make headlines as senior designer at the Donna Karan Company, he began to feel a creative void. He had always been interested in photography and loved to travel. He soon found a way to combine his two favorite hobbies and in doing so, began to embrace a new career. In 1995, Edward vacationed in Kenya, East Africa and then two years later, traveled to Morocco, North Africa in 1997. Each of these trips inspired him to create an artistically beautiful melange of photographs that blend the body with striking artifacts such as African masks, clothing and jewelry. "In doing this, I am able to capture the very essence of the land's people, paying tribute to them because they have such a keen sense of style and a lot of creative license that is very unique to them," explains Wilkerson.

- Genita Ingram

"SINCE AFRICA, MY SENSE OF COLOR HAS NOT BEEN THE SAME AFTER SEEING HOW MOTHER NATURE MADE GRASS SUCH A LUSH COLOR OF GREEN AND THE SENSUAL BLUE IN THE SKY"

BY DON CHARLES

TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

I wish I could say it was always nice to hear gay people in the media, but if I said that, I'd be lying. Here's an example. Last Sunday, I tuned into my local Pacific radio station to catch an interview with a gay activist/journalist. His name really isn't important. One of the first questions the interviewer asked was why this particular activist indulged in the frequent use of the words "faggot" and "queer" in print.

His answer went something like this: "I LOVE to use those words with my gay friends. My straight friends, too. Even my brother calls me 'faggot!' It's all about reclaiming these words that have been used to hurt us over the years. I know there was some controversy within the gay community a few years back about using the words "queer" and "faggot," but that's all over now! We queer activists won that battle."

Say WHAT? I almost broke my leg lunging for my radio dial. I couldn't switch that joker off fast enough! The brazen arrogance of this man, to presume he could decide for me how I'm to be addressed.... To get on national radio airwaves and all but encourage people to slur me, to reduce me to a stereotype. I had no intention of letting this imitation of a journalist spoil my Sunday afternoon. But if you listen to or read gay media to any extent, you know how prevalent his kind of attitude has become. From comedian Scott Thompson belting out a chorus of "Faggots On Parade," to comic strips with names like "Dykes To Watch Out For," to endless chants of "We're here, we're queer, get used to it," you can hardly escape it.

Never mind the fundamentalists, honey...it's our own kind we have to worry about. There's nothing like a healthy dose of shared self-hatred to give you that heartwarming "community" kind of feeling. NOT!

If you're African American, you certainly don't have to wait for a white gay radical to make this language issue real for you. Ensconce yourself in almost any gathering of black people for a given length of time, and you won't fail to hear the "n" word come up in casual conversation.

"Nigga" this. "Nigga" that. "Nigga" so high and wide, you can't get over or around it. "Child, wasn't that a *fine* nigga?" Black comedians and rap artists embraced the word years ago, and if truth be told, they've done much to popularize its use -and not just among black people. If you find this usage offensive, as I do, it's almost enough to make you seek out all-white environments. Sure, white people use the "n" word, too...hell, they invented it ...but at least most of the time, they have the common courtesy not to use it within your earshot.

I ask myself why oppressed peoples become so fiercely attached to words that were created by others to denigrate and demean them. A lot of people seem to harbor this bogus belief that the use of slurs within oppressed groups amounts to nothing more than expressions of ENDEARMENT. I ain't hardly down with that logic! I'll never forget hearing the topic of racial slurs discussed on a national black call-in show a few years ago; the honesty of one female caller left a lasting impression on me. She stated that on those occasions when she felt compelled to call her husband a "nigga," she seldom—if ever—felt "endeared" to him! HELLO...

By the time I was thirteen years of age, I pretty much knew all the nasty words. And every one of those fun four-letter exclamations that you can't find in your dictionary have fallen from my lips at various times over the years. (Hey, I can be as politically incorrect as the next person!) However, there are a handful of racist and homophobic terms I've never been, and will never be, comfortable using. I won't say I don't slip up sometimes, but I do consciously avoid saying them. I can't forget that words like "nigga," "faggot," and "dyke" are stained with blood and tears.

A LOT OF PEOPLE SEEM TO HARBOR THIS BOGUS BELIEF THAT THE USE OF SLURS WITHIN OPPRESSED GROUPS AMOUNTS TO NOTHING MORE THAN EXPRESSIONS OF ENDEARMENT. I AIN'T HARDLY DOWN WITH THAT LOGIC!

These words robbed children of their innocence, and elders of their dignity. Not to mention those who were robbed of their livelihood, and often, their very lives. It bears remembering that the "n" word was ringing in the ears of Abner Louima as his rectum was being ripped apart by racist New York cops. And five will get you ten that "faggot" and "queer" were two of the last words the late Matthew Shepherd heard as his murderers were crucifying him on a Wyoming fence.

We can't "reclaim" these slurs! They were never ours to begin with.

They were imposed on us by wicked people who used us to further dishonorable social agendas. Shame on us, we who call ourselves the black and the gay communities, if we can't muster enough creativity to replace their slurs with words of our own invention; words that convey pride, love, and solidarity without a hint of self-hatred. How hard can it be?

Eric Benet

Live for today. Sounds like good advice, but for Eric Benet, today isn't enough. "I like the idea of making music that transcends time and history," says the soft-spoken artist. "Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole; people will be playing their records a hundred years from now. I hope to make music like that."

That might be a tall order for most young artists, but with Eric Benet, the smart money is on him to make it. For with A Day In The Life, his new Warner Bros. Records album, Eric instantly vaults to the front ranks of innovative singer/songwriters.

In the wake of his 1996 debut, True to Myself, Eric toured the world, making friends and fans wherever he went. When he returned home to Milwaukee last year, he set to work, writing scores of new songs and teaming up with a handful of equally talented writers and producers. "I didn't go into this thinking I had to do everything better," he says. Grounded in classic R & B, A Day In The Life was largely inspired by Eric's real life experience. "I keep a journal," he says. "The album title came from rereading passages in my diary. As a songwriter, I just opened myself up to whatever came out of my heart."

The wistful ballad "Come As You Are" is perhaps the emotional centerpiece of the album, while "Love the Hurt Away," which features the gospel-influenced organ mastery of Demonte Posey, reflects Eric's roots. "It's got that old ghetto-gospel-blues thing," he says. "We tried to channel Al Green, Bobby Bland, and Curtis Mayfield on that one." The same could be said for "Ghetto Girl," featuring Me'Shell Ndege Ocello, a song that reflects Eric's hometown pride. Given his burgeoning career, you'd think he would move to New York or L.A., but he prefers to remain grounded in Milwaukee. "When people hear I'm from Milwaukee, the first thing they say, after mentioning 'Happy Days' is, 'I didn't know there were any Black people there.' Well, this town has a strong African American community, and I was raised right in the middle of it."

Eric's debut album, True to Yourself, caught the public's attention in 1996, and since then Eric has toured the U.S. with Erykah Badu. With the release of A Day In The Life, Eric is revving up the touring machine once again for a busy 1999.

Cruzan in St. Croix

So, you've planned that especially romantic vacation with that special someone. Sounds like a fabulous idea, but this can be a somewhat complex task for same sex partners. Have you ever experienced any of the following? When checking into a hotel, have you ever received looks when your partner and you request a king-size bed? While having the romantic dinner of a lifetime in a fine restaurant with an ocean view, have you ever had this uncontrollable urge to kiss your lover passionately but feel like you can't? Or what about that walk along the beach—why not hold hands?

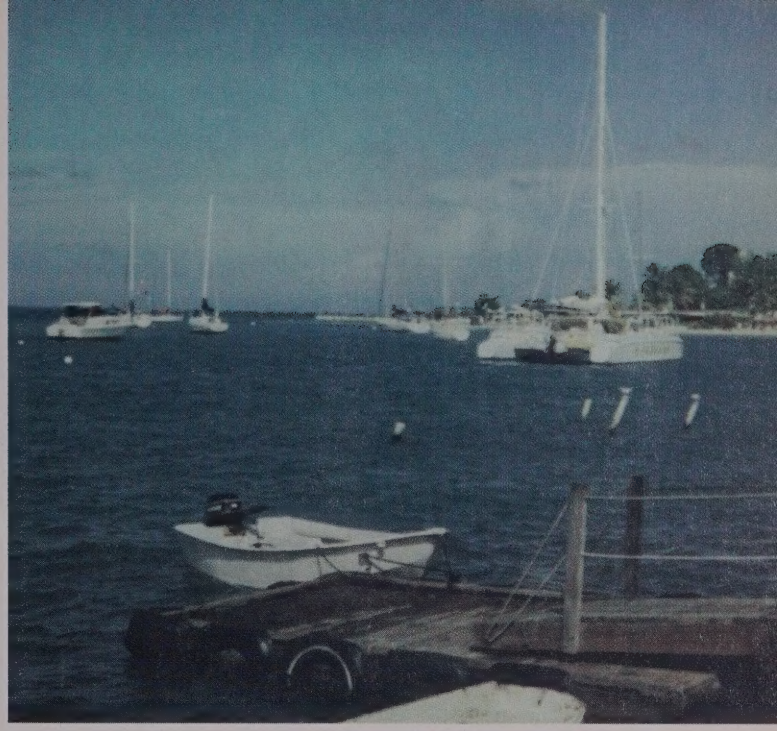
A lot of us have "lived on the edge" in these instances and have not given a second thought about being openly affectionate with our loved ones regardless of the sometimes dangerous circumstances. However, most of us tend to play it safe. Well, here's a suggestion: instead of vacationing in places with a predominately straight atmosphere, how about considering a paradise with something different—a destination that actually welcomes members of the gay and lesbian community. One such Caribbean island that has fostered a more "tolerant" attitude toward homosexuality is St. Croix.

Initially, the island was inhabited by the Ciboney tribe by way of South America. Afterwards, the Tainos/Arawaks came, then the Caribs, around 1425. Columbus arrived in 1493, a year after his infamous appearance in the U.S. His visit sparked the first conflict between Natives and Europeans that actually resulted in fatalities on both sides, as his crew attacked the members of the tribe as they came to welcome them in their canoes. There is a National Park commemorating the visit by Columbus. At that time, the island was named "Santa Cruz" by Spain. Nearly two hundred years later, the island was eventually "settled" by both the English and Dutch.

For the next three hundred years, Spain, England, the Netherlands, and France (who obviously named the island St. Croix) were among the seven nations that ruled there. Lucrative profits were made from sugar production and cotton among other natural resources. Today, abandoned sugar mills and stately plantations remain as stark reminders of that time in history. Despite this significant period, St. Croix has retained its West Indian cultural heritage and beauty which gives us all reason to visit this magnificent tropical gem.

The largest of the United States Virgin Islands (second to St. Thomas, then St. John), St. Croix measures about 28 miles long and 7 miles wide of immaculate beaches, tropical rain forests, and desert vegetation. The average temperature is close to eighty degrees Fahrenheit, nearing ninety in the summer and rarely going below seventy in the winter. The population is in the vicinity of 100,000. The currency is the U.S. dollar and English is spoken here, along with a delicious Caribbean patois. As I mentioned before, St. Croix has a tolerant attitude about our presence, but don't expect rainbow flags waving everywhere and a pumping gay night life. The island is geared toward simply chillin'. Life is easygoing. Being gay is just matter-of-fact. The gay continentals (immigrants of European descent) co-exist with the native (the brothers and sisters) Cruzans, who, due to cultural reasons, are more closeted.

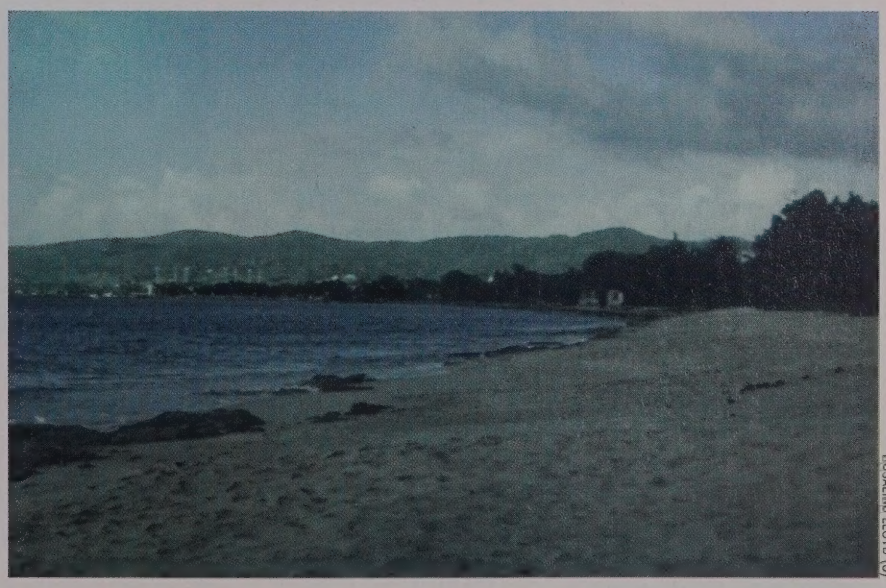
St. Croix is divided by two main



INSTEAD OF VACATIONING IN PLACES WITH A PREDOMINATELY STRAIGHT ATMOSPHERE, HOW ABOUT CONSIDERING A PARADISE WITH SOMETHING DIFFERENT—A DESTINATION THAT ACTUALLY WELCOMES MEMBERS OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY.

towns. Frediksted is known for its rain forests, botanical gardens, and the port where cruise ships dock. Christiansted is recognized for its attention to historical detail noted in its 18th century architecture, along with its array of hotels, shops and restaurants. For nature and water sports enthusiasts, I strongly suggest a trip to Buck Island. A national monument located just a short ride away from Christiansted, here is where I experienced some of the most exquisite snorkeling ever. Shortly after diving into the sea from the tour boat, we were greeted by a friendly manta ray in four feet of water!

There are many tours that offer decent snorkeling and scuba diving excursions, glass-bottom boat trips, nighttime cruises, parasailing and game fishing. For those not into the water sport thing, there is, of course, shopping, horseback riding along the beach, bike tours, tennis, golf—the list goes on. And there is, of course, my favorite thing to do: relaxing on the beach or by the pool, catching some rays while holding the hand of my boo at a resort that caters to the "family." The Cormorant Beach



ROSALIND LLOYD (3)

Club & Hotel is set on 12 acres, 3 miles west of Christensted. This lovely beachfront property boasts a prime snorkeling reef, a fresh-water pool, two tennis courts and an open air sea view lounge and restaurant. Arthur and Gregory, a committed couple of nineteen years, market their resort to Gay and Lesbian couples "who like to honeymoon every time they travel," but trust, singles or a bunch of friends can have a mad time there. It's a great place to socialize with gay and lesbian Cruzans.

So what are you waiting for? Make travel plans for that honeymoon right now! Request that king-size bed with your suite, and don't forget to tell them Ros sent ya!

by Rosalind Christine Lloyd

Drug holidays: One vacation you don't want to take

It sounds so good

Give your body a rest, a chance to recover from all those tough meds and their side effects. Just skip a dose, or a day, or a weekend...

The truth?

You're doing the virus a big favor. Suddenly, without your HIV drugs, there's nothing to stop the virus from making billions of copies of itself. And each and every new copy gives HIV a chance to change, to find a new form that could be resistant to the drugs you're taking.

In other words, when you go back to your regular medication schedule, there's a chance the drugs may no longer work as well.

HIV drugs should be taken on time, every day. That's the only way known to keep enough of each drug in your blood at all times to fight HIV.

The bottom line:

Why help the virus hurt you? Next time you're tempted to skip a dose or two, think again...or else a "minor" drug holiday could end up being a serious threat to your health. Don't let your vacation put HIV back to work.

Call 1-800 760-5912

Be Smart!

For more information on drug holidays and other helpful information on managing HIV

call 1-800-760-5912
or see www.treathiv.com

PROVEN POWER for HIV

Simplify your combination therapy

Combivir can make it easier for you to stay on your medication schedule

- *Two proven HIV therapies are in one tablet*
- *One Combivir Tablet morning and night, with or without food*
- *Helps you live a longer, healthier life[1,2]*

The safety profile of Combivir should be the same as that of Epivir® (lamivudine; 3TC®) + Retrovir® (zidovudine; AZT). The most frequent side effects associated with Epivir + Retrovir taken together are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with some HIV drugs, including AZT and 3TC.

Ask your healthcare professional about

Combivir®

lamivudine 150 mg/zidovudine 300 mg

ONE TABLET TWICE A DAY

Smarter Together

Call 1•800•760•5912 for more information or see www.treathiv.com

References: 1. CAESAR Coordinating Committee. Randomised trial of addition of lamivudine or lamivudine plus loviride to zidovudine-containing regimens for patients with HIV-1 infection: the CAESAR trial. *Lancet.* 1997; 349:1413-1421. **2.** Hammer SM, Squires KE, Hughes MD, et al. A controlled trial of two nucleoside analogues plus indinavir in persons with human immunodeficiency virus infection and CD4 cell counts of 200 per cubic millimeter or less. *N Engl J Med.* 1997;337:725-733.

Please see brief summary for Combivir on adjacent page.

Glaxo Wellcome HIV
A division of Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
Web site: www.glaxowellcome.com

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BRIEF SUMMARY

COMBIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine/zidovudine tablets)

The following is a brief summary only; see full prescribing information for complete product information.

WARNING: ZIDOVUDINE, ONE OF THE TWO ACTIVE INGREDIENTS IN COMBIVIR, HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH HEMATOLOGIC TOXICITY INCLUDING NEUTROPENIA AND SEVERE ANEMIA, PARTICULARLY IN PATIENTS WITH ADVANCED HIV DISEASE (SEE WARNINGS). PROLONGED USE OF ZIDOVUDINE HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH SYMPTOMATIC MYOPATHY.

LACTIC ACIDOSIS AND SEVERE HEPATOMEGALY WITH STEATOSIS, INCLUDING FATAL CASES, HAVE BEEN REPORTED WITH THE USE OF ANTIRETROVIRAL NUCLEOSIDE ANALOGUES ALONE OR IN COMBINATION, INCLUDING ZIDOVUDINE AND LAMIVUDINE (SEE WARNINGS).

INDICATIONS AND USAGE: COMBIVIR is indicated for the treatment of HIV infection.

Description of Clinical Studies: ***COMBIVIR:*** There have been no clinical trials conducted with COMBIVIR. See CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY for information about bioequivalence. One COMBIVIR Tablet given twice a day is an alternative regimen to EPIVIR Tablets 150 mg twice a day plus RETROVIR 600 mg per day in divided doses.

Lamivudine Plus Zidovudine: The NUCB3007 (CAESAR) study was conducted using EPIVIR 150-mg Tablets (150 mg b.i.d.) and RETROVIR 100-mg Capsules (2 x 100 mg t.i.d.). CAESAR was a multicenter, double-blind, placebo-controlled study comparing continued current therapy [zidovudine alone (62% of patients) or zidovudine with didanosine or zalcitabine (38% of patients)] to the addition of EPIVIR or EPIVIR plus an investigational non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor, randomized 1:2:1. A total of 1816 HIV-infected adults with 25 to 250 (median 122) CD4 cells/mm^3 at baseline were enrolled: median age was 36 years, 87% were male, 84% were nucleoside-experienced, and 16% were therapy-naive. The median duration on study was 12 months. Results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of Patients (%) With At Least One HIV Disease-Progression Event or Death

Endpoint	Current Therapy (n = 460)	EPIVIR plus Current Therapy (n = 896)	EPIVIR plus a NNRTI* plus Current Therapy (n = 460)
HIV progression or death	90 (19.6%)	86 (9.6%)	41 (8.9%)
Death	27 (5.9%)	23 (2.6%)	14 (3.0%)

*An investigational non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor not approved in the United States.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: COMBIVIR Tablets are contraindicated in patients with previously demonstrated clinically significant hypersensitivity to any of the components of the product.

WARNINGS: COMBIVIR is a fixed-dose combination of lamivudine and zidovudine. Ordinarily, COMBIVIR should not be administered concomitantly with either lamivudine or zidovudine.

The complete prescribing information for all agents being considered for use with COMBIVIR should be consulted before combination therapy with COMBIVIR is initiated.

Bone Marrow Suppression: COMBIVIR should be used with caution in patients who have bone marrow compromise evidenced by granulocyte count <1000 cells/mm^3 or hemoglobin <9.5 g/dL (see ADVERSE REACTIONS).

Frequent blood counts are strongly recommended in patients with advanced HIV disease who are treated with COMBIVIR. For HIV-infected individuals and patients with asymptomatic or early HIV disease, periodic blood counts are recommended.

Lactic Acidosis/Severe Hepatomegaly with Steatosis: Lactic acidosis and severe hepatomegaly with steatosis, including fatal cases, have been reported with the use of antiretroviral nucleoside analogues alone or in combination, including zidovudine and lamivudine. A majority of these cases have been in women. Caution should be exercised when administering COMBIVIR to any patient, and particularly to those with known risk factors for liver disease. Treatment with COMBIVIR should be suspended in any patient who develops clinical or laboratory findings suggestive of lactic acidosis or hepatotoxicity.

Myopathy: Myopathy and myositis, with pathological changes similar to that produced by HIV disease, have been associated with prolonged use of zidovudine, and therefore may occur with therapy with COMBIVIR.

PRECAUTIONS:

General: Reduction of doses of lamivudine is recommended for patients with low body weight (less than 50 kg or 110 lb); therefore patients with low body weight should not receive COMBIVIR.

Patients With HIV and Hepatitis B Virus Coinfection: In clinical trials and postmarketing experience, some patients with HIV infection who have chronic liver disease due to hepatitis B virus infection experienced clinical or laboratory evidence of recurrent hepatitis upon discontinuation of lamivudine. Consequences may be more severe in patients with decompensated liver disease.

Patients With Impaired Renal Function: Reduction of the dosages of lamivudine and zidovudine is recommended for patients with impaired renal function. Patients with creatinine clearance ≤50 mL/min should not receive COMBIVIR.

Information for Patients: COMBIVIR is not a cure for HIV infection and patients may continue to experience illnesses associated with HIV infection, including opportunistic infections. Patients should be advised that the use of COMBIVIR has not been shown to reduce the risk of transmission of HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Patients should be informed that the major toxicities of COMBIVIR are neutropenia and/or anemia. They should be told of the extreme importance of having their blood counts followed closely while on therapy, especially for patients with advanced HIV disease. Patients should be advised of the importance of taking COMBIVIR as it is prescribed.

Drug Interactions: Coadministration of ganciclovir, interferon-alpha, and other bone marrow suppressive or cytotoxic agents may increase the hematologic toxicity of zidovudine (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY section of full prescribing information).

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, and Impairment of Fertility: ***Carcinogenicity:***

Lamivudine: Lamivudine long-term carcinogenicity studies in mice and rats showed no evidence of carcinogenic potential at exposures up to 10 times (mice) and 58 times (rats) those observed in humans at the recommended therapeutic dose.

Zidovudine: Zidovudine was administered orally at three dosage levels to separate groups of mice and rats (60 females and 60 males in each group). Initial single daily doses were 30, 60, and 120 mg/kg per day in mice and 80, 220, and 600 mg/kg per day in rats. The doses in mice were reduced to 20, 30, and 40 mg/kg per day after day 90 because of treatment-related anemia, whereas in rats only the high dose was reduced to 450 mg/kg per day on day 91 and then to 300 mg/kg per day on day 279.

In mice, seven late-appearing (after 19 months) vaginal neoplasms (five nonmetastasizing squamous cell carcinomas, one squamous cell papilloma, and one squamous polyp) occurred in animals given the highest dose. One late-appearing squamous cell papilloma occurred in the vagina of a middle-dose animal. No vaginal tumors were found at the lowest dose.

In rats, two late-appearing (after 20 months), nonmetastasizing vaginal squamous cell carcinomas occurred in animals given the highest dose. No vaginal tumors occurred at the low or middle dose in rats. No other drug-related tumors were observed in either sex of either species.

At doses that produced tumors in mice and rats, the estimated drug exposure (as measured by AUC) was approximately three times (mouse) and 24 times (rat) the estimated human exposure at the recommended therapeutic dose of 100 mg every 4 hours.

Two transplacental carcinogenicity studies were conducted in mice. One study administered zidovudine at doses of 20 mg/kg per day or 40 mg/kg per day from gestation day 10 through parturition and lactation with dosing continuing in offspring for 24 months postnatally. The doses of zidovudine employed in this study produced zidovudine exposures approximately three times the estimated human exposure at recommended doses. After 24 months, at the highest dose, an increase in incidence of vaginal tumors was noted with no increase in tumors in the liver or lung or any other organ in either gender. These findings are consistent with results of the standard oral carcinogenicity study in mice, as described earlier. A second study administered zidovudine at maximum tolerated doses of 12.5 mg/day or 25 mg/day (~1000 mg/kg nonpregnant body weight or ~450 mg/kg of term body weight) to pregnant mice from days 12 through 18 of gestation. There was an increase in the number of tumors in the lung, liver, and female reproductive tracts in the offspring of mice receiving the higher dose level of zidovudine.

It is not known how predictive the results of rodent carcinogenicity studies may be for humans.

Mutagenicity: Lamivudine: Lamivudine was negative in a microbial mutagenicity screen, in an in vitro cell transformation assay, in a rat micronucleus test, in a rat bone marrow cytogenetic assay, and in an assay for unscheduled DNA synthesis in rat liver. It was mutagenic in a L5178Y/TK$^{+/-}$ mouse lymphoma assay and clastogenic in a cytogenetic assay using cultured human lymphocytes.

Zidovudine: Zidovudine was mutagenic in a L5178Y/TK$^{+/-}$ mouse lymphoma assay, positive in an in vitro cell transformation assay, clastogenic in a cytogenetic assay using cultured human lymphocytes, and positive in mouse and rat micronucleus tests after repeated doses. It was negative in a cytogenetic study in rats given a single dose.

Impairment of Fertility: Lamivudine: In a study of reproductive performance, lamivudine, administered to male and female rats at doses up to 130 times the usual adult dose based on body surface area considerations, revealed no evidence of impaired fertility (judged by conception rates) and no effect on the survival, growth, and development to weaning of the offspring.

Zidovudine: Zidovudine, administered to male and female rats at doses up to 7 times the usual adult dose based on body surface area considerations, had no effect on fertility judged by conception rates.

Pregnancy: Pregnancy Category C.

COMBIVIR: There are no adequate and well-controlled studies of COMBIVIR in pregnant women. Reproduction studies with lamivudine and zidovudine have been performed in animals (see Lamivudine and Zidovudine sections below). COMBIVIR should be used during pregnancy only if the potential benefits outweigh the risks.

Lamivudine: Reproduction studies with orally administered lamivudine have been performed in rats and rabbits at 130 and 60 times, respectively, the usual adult dose (based on relative body surface area) and have revealed no evidence of teratogenicity. Some evidence of early embryolethality was seen in the rabbit at doses similar to those produced by the usual adult dose and higher, but there was no indication of this effect in the rat at orally administered doses up to 130 times the usual adult dose. Studies in pregnant rats and rabbits showed that lamivudine is transferred to the fetus through the placenta.

Zidovudine: Reproduction studies with orally administered zidovudine in the rat and in the rabbit at doses up to 500 mg/kg per day revealed no evidence of teratogenicity with zidovudine. Zidovudine treatment resulted in embryo/fetal toxicity as evidenced by an increase in the incidence of fetal resorptions in rats given 150 or 450 mg/kg per day and rabbits given 500 mg/kg per day. The doses used in the teratology studies resulted in peak zidovudine plasma concentrations (after one-half of the daily dose) in rats 66 to 226 times, and in rabbits 12 to 87 times, mean steady-state peak human plasma concentrations (after one-sixth of the daily dose) achieved with the recommended daily dose (100 mg every 4 hours). In an additional teratology study in rats, a dose of 3000 mg/kg per day (very near the oral median lethal dose in rats of 3683 mg/kg) caused marked maternal toxicity and an increase in the incidence of fetal malformations. This dose resulted in peak zidovudine plasma concentrations 350 times peak human plasma concentrations. No evidence of teratogenicity was seen in this experiment at doses of 600 mg/kg per day or less. Two rodent carcinogenicity studies were conducted (see Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility).

Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry: To monitor maternal-fetal outcomes of pregnant women exposed to COMBIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine/zidovudine tablets) and other antiretroviral agents, an Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry has been established. Physicians are encouraged to register patients by calling 1-800-258-4263.

Nursing Mothers: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that HIV-infected mothers not breastfeed their infants to avoid risking postnatal transmission of HIV infection.

COMBIVIR: Zidovudine is excreted in breast milk (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: Pharmacokinetics: Nursing Mothers subsection of full prescribing information); however, no data are available on COMBIVIR or lamivudine. Therefore, there is a potential for adverse effects in nursing infants. **Mothers should be instructed not to breastfeed if they are receiving COMBIVIR.**

Pediatric Use: COMBIVIR should not be administered to pediatric patients less than 12 years of age because it is a fixed-dose combination that cannot be adjusted for this patient population.

ADVERSE REACTIONS:

Lamivudine Plus Zidovudine Administered As Separate Formulations: In four randomized, controlled trials of EPIVIR 300 mg per day plus RETROVIR 600 mg per day, the following selected clinical and laboratory adverse events were observed (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2: Selected Clinical Adverse Events (≥5% Frequency) in Four Controlled Clinical Trials With EPIVIR 300 mg/day and RETROVIR 600 mg/day

Adverse Event		EPIVIR plus RETROVIR (n = 251)
Body as a whole	Headache	35%
	Malaise & fatigue	27%
	Fever or chills	10%
Digestive	Nausea	33%
	Diarrhea	18%
	Nausea & vomiting	13%
	Anorexia and/or decreased appetite	10%
	Abdominal pain	9%
	Abdominal cramps	6%
	Dyspepsia	5%
Nervous system	Neuropathy	12%
	Insomnia & other sleep disorders	11%
	Dizziness	10%
	Depressive disorders	9%
Respiratory	Nasal signs & symptoms	20%
	Cough	18%
Skin	Skin rashes	9%
Musculoskeletal	Musculoskeletal pain	12%
	Myalgia	8%
	Arthralgia	5%

Pancreatitis was observed in three of the 656 adult patients (<0.5%) who received EPIVIR in controlled clinical trials. Selected laboratory abnormalities observed during therapy are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequencies of Selected Laboratory Abnormalities Among Adults in Four Controlled Clinical Trials of EPIVIR 300 mg/day plus RETROVIR 600 mg/day*

Test (Abnormal Level)	EPIVIR plus RETROVIR % (n)
Neutropenia (ANC<750/mm^3)	7.2% (237)
Anemia (Hgb<8.0 g/dL)	2.9% (241)
Thrombocytopenia (platelets<50,000/mm^3)	0.4% (240)
ALT (>5.0 x ULN)	3.7% (241)
AST (>5.0 x ULN)	1.7% (241)
Bilirubin (>2.5 x ULN)	0.8% (241)
Amylase (>2.0 x ULN)	4.2% (72)

ULN = Upper limit of normal.
ANC = Absolute neutrophil count.
n = Number of patients assessed.
*Frequencies of these laboratory abnormalities were higher in patients with mild laboratory abnormalities at baseline.

Observed During Clinical Practice: In addition to adverse events reported from clinical trials, the following events have been identified during post-approval use of EPIVIR and/or RETROVIR. Because they are reported voluntarily from a population of unknown size, estimates of frequency cannot be made. These events have been chosen for inclusion due to a combination of their seriousness, frequency of reporting, or potential causal connection to EPIVIR and/or RETROVIR.

Endocrine and Metabolic: Hyperglycemia.

General: Sensitization reactions (including anaphylaxis), vasculitis.

Hepatobiliary Tract and Pancreas: Lactic acidosis and hepatic steatosis (see WARNINGS), pancreatitis.

Musculoskeletal: Muscle weakness with CPK elevation, rhabdomyolysis.

Nervous: Seizures.

Skin: Alopecia, erythema multiforme, Stevens-Johnson syndrome, urticaria.

OVERDOSAGE:

COMBIVIR: There is no known antidote for COMBIVIR.

Lamivudine: One case of an adult ingesting 6 grams of lamivudine was reported; there were no clinical signs or symptoms noted and hematologic tests remained normal. It is not known whether lamivudine can be removed by peritoneal dialysis or hemodialysis.

Zidovudine: Acute overdoses of zidovudine have been reported in pediatric patients and adults. These involved exposures up to 50 grams. The only consistent findings were nausea and vomiting. Other reported occurrences included headache, dizziness, drowsiness, lethargy, confusion, and one report of a grand mal seizure. Hematologic changes were transient. All patients recovered. Hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis appear to have a negligible effect on the removal of zidovudine while elimination of its primary metabolite, GZDV, is enhanced.

DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION: The recommended oral dose of COMBIVIR for adults and adolescents (at least 12 years of age) is one tablet (containing 150 mg of lamivudine and 300 mg of zidovudine) twice daily.

Dose Adjustment: Because it is a fixed-dose combination, COMBIVIR should not be prescribed for patients requiring dosage adjustment such as those with reduced renal function (creatinine clearance ≤50 mL/min), those with low body weight (<50 kg or 110 lb), or those experiencing dose-limiting adverse events.

US Patent Nos. 5,047,407; 4,818,538; 4,828,838; 4,724,232; 4,833,130; and 4,837,208

GlaxoWellcome

Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Lamivudine is manufactured under agreement from Biochem Pharma Inc.
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COMING SOON

The Y2K Problem

Throughout history, technology has brought both unexpected benefits and costs. The latest in a long line of snafus is the Year 2000 problem, often abbreviated as Y2K.

Simply put, many computer programmers in the past didn't expect the machines they were programming to still be in use today, so they permitted years to have only two digits. This shortsightedness will cause many programs to misread January 1, 2000, as January 1, 1900, which is expected to lead to widespread computer malfunctions and even crashes.

You would think that correcting Y2K would be easy. One thorny obstacle is finding the millions of tiny microprocessors embedded unobtrusively in the equipment of power plants and similar systems used by other industries. Another is having to manually sift through billions of lines of mainframe computer code–the intricacies makes automation impossible.

Personal computers are not immune. Inexcusably, many newer programs and computers were programmed without regard for the next millennium.

You've probably read some of the gloom-and-doom prophesies about the consequences of all this. The worst of the alarmists are predicting the collapse of industries ranging from electric power and telecommunications to banking and transportation, and they're planning to head for the hills to avoid the food shortages, bank closures, and riots that they expect will follow.

At the other extreme, others are pooh-poohing all the hullabaloo, confident that the experts will take care of matters.

Nobody knows for sure what's going to happen. But the best analysts are saying that we'll likely experience at least some disruptions, individually or collectively, and that some of these will be serious.

Fortunately, you can take steps to prepare for the problems you can't solve. And if you have a PC, you can take other steps to solve problems that may affect it.

Personal computer problems, though not hassle-free, are easiest to fix.

First, check with whomever you bought your computer to see if it's Y2K-compliant. Most newer models are, but even PCs a couple of years old may need an upgrade to their BIOS, which is a chip that includes instructions for handling dates and other operations.

Upgrading a BIOS can involve popping out the old chip and inserting a new one or downloading software over the Internet and "flashing" your old BIOS with updated code. You need to be careful here–a misstep can render your PC inoperable. Even though I followed instructions, flashing the BIOS of my 2 1/2-year-old Pentium 166 caused its sound to malfunction, which required a phone call to the manufacturer to fix.

You can alternately test your PC to

and You

see if it's Y2K-compliant. A number of Web sites provide access to free software for this purpose along with background information, including PC Magazine's at http://www.pcmag.com/y2k and CNET's at http://www.cnet.com/Content/Reports/Special/Y2K.

Software programs may also have problems when the new century rolls around. The most foolproof solution is to simply upgrade to the latest version of any mission-critical programs you use. Alternately, you can check with the software developer to see whether the version you're using is Y2K-compliant and, if not, whether a fix is available.

If you have a Macintosh computer, you have less to worry about, since the Mac and most Mac programs will handle the transition with ease.

Apple's Y2K site is at http://www.apple.com/macos/info/2000.html.

Some Y2K issues are entirely your own doing. Whether you're PC or Mac-based, if you've used two digits for date entries in spreadsheet, database, or accounting programs, and you plan to use the same files beyond 1999, you should convert the dates to four digits or look into other remedies.

Y2K issues involving custom computer programs can be a more difficult fix, and you or your organization should already have begun the process of identifying and fixing problems. This task can be so formidable that some organizations are replacing entire systems with newer ones.

The Y2K consequences beyond your control, if they occur at all, will likely be temporary. Still, short of becoming a survivalist, it makes sense to prepare for them. In case your bank's ATMs don't work correctly on January 1, 2000, have a little extra cash on hand. In the event of a food distribution foul-up, consider stocking up on a few canned goods during the week before.

Finally, since we'll be at the mercy of winter's throes, and since utility companies with all of their embedded processors may be most vulnerable to Y2K, have a contingency plan ready if you wake up in the middle of the night shivering.

Reid Goldsborough is a syndicated columnist and author of Straight Talk About the Information Superhighway.

IBM Gay and Lesbian Business Forum

For the first time ever, a group of Latin and African American gays and lesbians representing organizations and businesses from around the country met in Washington, D.C. at the IBM Gay and Lesbian Business Forum. The event was hosted by Venus magazine and National Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Organization, LLEGO. IBM sponsored the meeting and the company's Community Affairs Director, Leslie Smith, was the keynote speaker.

The group was welcomed by LLEGO Executive Director Martin Ornelas-Quintero (Pictured, top). The goals of the meeting were threefold: to give minority businesses within the gay and lesbian community an opportunity to develop a partnership with IBM; to network and exchange ideas about how to build better business relationships within minority communities across cultural lines; and to discuss Year 2000 problems and solutions.

IBM was cautioned by Clara Pizana of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, Inc. about the need for the company to spend more money in Latin and African American communities before expecting the communities to commit to business relationships. The group was reminded that big business spends money in areas where demographic studies show there are responsive communities in need of their products and services. "Although I KNOW you're out there, I've been told that you folks [black and Latino gays and lesbians] are not even here," says Smith.

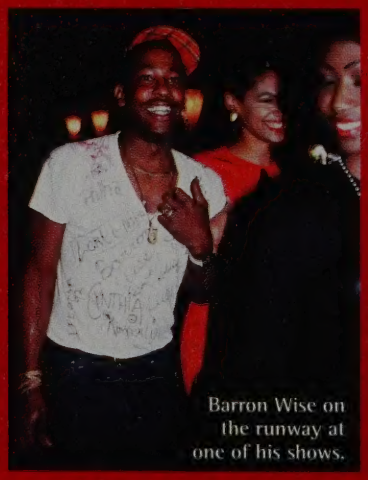
"It isn't that we are NOT here, it's that we have not been willing to stand up and say that we ARE here," returned Charlene Cothran, publisher of Venus magazine, who further expressed an urgent need for a demographic study of minority gay and lesbian communities. "When white gays wanted to be taken seriously by big business, they pooled their resources and paid to have a market study produced. Those numbers are now used in commercial industry as the standard for the whole gay and lesbian community but very few of the respondents to the surveys were people of color," says Cothran.

James Homer of Atlanta, who sits on the boards of several BLGT organizations asked, "So how, then, do we go about building relationships with major corporations?"

"By putting your money where your mouth is," answered Cornelius Wilson of Men of Color, Inc., of Detroit. Pending budget approval, Wilson is planning to purchase several new computers from IBM through the Venus magazine website where the company has offered several discounts on new products. "IBM recognizes that we exist and this is one way to show the company that we ARE here. Sure I can get the same computers somewhere else, but by making this type of purchase, my organization makes a statement about it's identity, and it's economic strength, all with one swipe of a credit card."

stylewise

New York fashion designer Barron Wise presents classic looks from his signature collection. The seasoned designer, who ran a 7th Avenue apparel shop earlier in his career now concentrates on private clients and menswear. "Don't call it a comeback," he says from his Harlem showroom, "I've been here for years and my collections are stronger than they've ever been." He also designs wedding gowns, prom dresses, and summer apparel for men. Call 212-690-2167 for an appointment.



Barron Wise on the runway at one of his shows.

Pumpkin Deep V-neck matte jersey dress

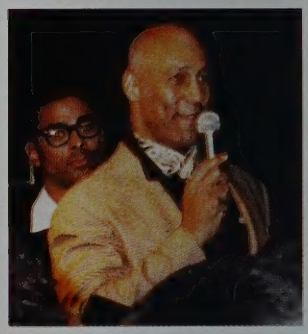
ALL PHOTOS COURTESY BARRON WISE

The Big Red Dress.
top: silk broadcloth
with silk tafetta trim.
skirt: red silk tafetta
with silk satin trim.

Periwinkle silk
chiffon and silk
satin winged dress.

Men of Color

Fall Fashion Week in New York brought out some of the city's Finest black male models including these gentlemen who dazzled a packed house at Café Soul Restaurant in Manhattan. The event marked the release of 'Men of Color' by Lloyd Boston. The book celebrates the history of Black male models.



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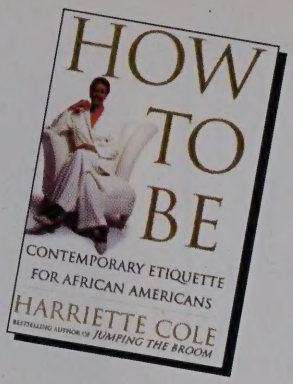

Harriette Cole, author of *'How to Be: Contemporary Etiquette for African-Americans'* and Llyod Boston, author of *'Men of Color'*.

Reknown make-up artist, Reggie Wells, second from right, and other guest were in attendance.

How to Be

Harriette Cole, best selling author of 'Jumping the Broom' launched her new book *'How To Be: Contemporary Etiquette for African-Americans'*, [Simon and Schuster, 1999 ISBN:0-684-82645-3] with a totally fabulous Manhattan party during Fall Fashion week. In the book, you'll find everything you need to know about how to honor your heritage; how to entertain one or a hundred; how to handle workplace issues; how to deal with family occasions from weddings to funerals and much, much more.

The book also addresses homophobia in black culture and offers suggestions on how the Black family might reevaluate the way they think of their gay brothers and sisters. "One gay man in a focus group said to me later that he didn't contribute fully because he knew that he would be made to feel unwelcome," she said during an interview from her Manhattan office. This encounter encouraged her to include research information on how in some traditional African societies, gays and lesbians are considered 'gatekeepers' and keepers of peace among the communities.

'How to Be' incredibly includes a 'how to' chapter for same-sex union ceremonies. Another chapter on dating includes same-sex relationships. Here she reveals what black gays have shared in focus groups around the country.

Things like why we're still searching for meaningful relationships in the bars. "Another gay man shared that because of social discomfort experienced by black gay men, it is hard to build wholesome relationships because they feel forced to go to clubs where no one can find a meaningful partner," she said.

The Founder and CEO of Profundities, Inc., and former fashion editor for *Essence* Magazine, Ms. Cole seemed eager to point out that she hopes her new book will help create "positive meaningful dialogue" within the black family. "When it comes to our gay brothers and sisters, most Black folks become focused on their SEXuality rather than their PERSONality. I hope my book will inspire people to look inside their own life, to have respect for the many differences of our people and to recognize that we all have gifts to offer."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIMBERLY PURNELL

Harritte Cole and *Black Enterprise* Magazine publisher, Earl Graves at a Manhattan book release party for *'How to Be'*.

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Left to Right - Brian Hayes Copeland, Healing Art Committee Member; Pernessa Seele, Founder/CEO of The Balm In Gilead; Brunson Nutridge, Artist; Jay Claude, Gay Men of African Descent; Kevin McGruder, Gay Men of African Descent

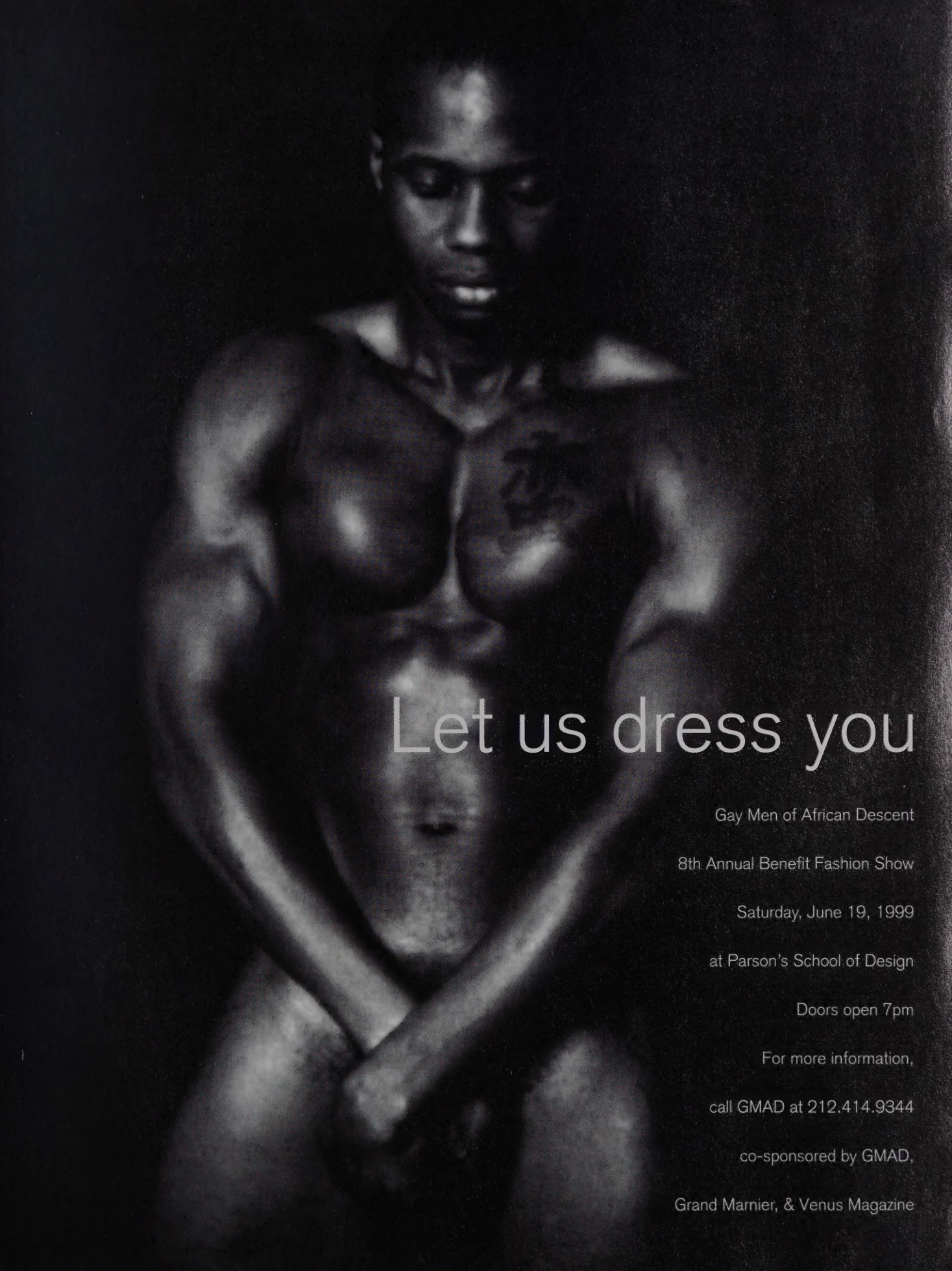
Brunson Nutridge, Artist

Joyce McDonald, Artist

The Balm in Gilead,

in observance of the Black Church Week of Prayer, presented six black artist art work.

The presentation entitled, *Healing Art: Visual Artists of African Descent in the Face of AIDS* was very well received and attended by black ministers of numerous Black Churches within the New York area as well as the *Daily News, NY1* and *WMBC, channel 69*. The project of Healing Art was conceived by committee member Ademola Mandella who stated that, "it is through this process of sharing visual expressions that we are healed from some of the pain that we have experienced from this epidemic." CEO and founder Pernessa C. Seele encouraged the attendees and press to get involved in educating the churches about HIV/AIDS and to keep the doors of communication open and flowing.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COURTESY BYRON STEWART

A REAL READ: Doing Real Theatre

While Byron Stewart was pursuing a mainstream theater career, he just happened to catch a performance of the west coast gay male ensemble, Afro Pomo Homo.

Little did he know that this would be a turning point for him. Inspired by their work, Stewart began attending and performing at poetry readings in his native Chicago community. He even created and presented a one-man show, Black Out, which chronicled his personal saga as a gay man.

Stewart was amazed to find not only was there an audience for this type of theater, but there were other artists eager to participate in the creation of black gay productions. The Howard University graduate joined forces with two other local artists, Byron Mason and Sanford Gaylord, and together co-founded A Real Read, an African American gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered theater company based in Chicago, who prides itself on bringing a real message that is truthful and fierce. The company is committed to providing theater for, by, and about black alternative lifestyles.

Since its inception in 1996, A Real Read has had a number of acclaimed productions to its credit; Manchild, a drama about a bisexual drug dealer whose life is steeped in crisis; also, We Heard the Night Outside, which is the love story of the poets Essex Hemphill and Larry Duckette.

The company began with a faithful few, who were brave and bold enough to share their own stories. The company soon turned to pieces written by local gay and lesbian playwrights and poets, which were performed for local fundraisers, community events, and some Chicago high schools. The founders of A Real Read are proud that their company is made up of diverse genders, sexualities, and both professional and community actors.

A Real Read has never been afraid to be real. These artists take on the hard issues: relationships, HIV and AIDS, and the plain trials and triumphs of living in the life. About their dramatic works, Stewart says, "They come straight at ya." No apologies, no compromises.

According to Stewart, the response to A Real Read has been fantastic. Its work appeals to a wide range of people. From Blacks, Latinos, and whites, to straight and gay folk. As the word gets out, A Real Read is receiving invitations to other stages, both in and outside of Chicago. The company performed at New York University's Tisch School of Performing Arts and was featured on "In The Life", a PBS television show.

The company has also completed its first theater festival, "ALL OUT," which was comprised of five plays by Atlanta based playwright, Shirlene Holmes. These plays, which ranged from the sacred to the profane, paint a realistic picture of Black gay and lesbian life. From the sensitive and romantic, A Lady and a Woman, to the real and risque toast, Peaches.

Doing this play festival, which ran earlier this spring at the Baileywick Theatre, created excitement in the company and provided company members an opportunity to grow, and exposed the Chicago audience to other great pride plays. For this festival, A Real Read brought in guest directors, which was also a first. The festival was "all Black and all gay," Stewart exclaims with pride. And new projects are already in the works. He exhorts, "There's no excuse—it's here for you. Come and get it."

- S. Holmes

Sheryl Lee Ralph

From Dreamgirl to waitress; mistress to hair salon owner; voodou priestess to mother; Sheryl Lee Ralph has run the gamut when it comes to performing. From a young age, Sheryl has worked with the likes of Bill Cosby and Sidney Poitier in "Uptown Saturday Night", Denzel Washington in "The Mighty Quinn", Robert DeNiro in "The Mistress" and "Whoppi Goldberg in "Sister Act Two", just to name a few. Her recent portrayal of Brandy's step-mother on UPN's "Moesha" is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to working for Sheryl.

Sheryl's recent endeavors revolve around directing. "Directing is a natural and necessary progression for me. I felt the need to give life to stories and characters that have been silent for too long for too many reasons."

Little do many people know, but Sheryl also produces a benefit to raise funds for AIDS every year in May called "DIVAS! Simply Singing!

This magnetic show hosts Divas of all genre's singing one song accompanied by piano only! (Now you know you better know how to sing) "AIDS is a disease that has touched my life in many ways, and it just seemed natural to give back work at helping to fight a disease that has crippled our lives."

Sheryl has two beautiful children named Etienne and Ivy. "These two are my greatest accomplishments. They've made me see and realize what a beauty life really is."

TRIVIA QUESTION: What was the name of the only album Sheryl recorded?

The first person to answer correctly will receive an autographed photo from Sheryl.

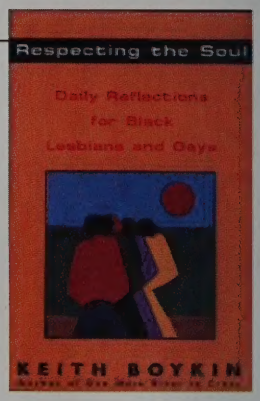
Send repies to:

editor@venusmagazine.com or fax to 914.376.1666. Include a mailing address!

- Kimberly Purnell

Respecting the Soul

RESPECTING THE SOUL:
Daily Reflections for Black Lesbians and Gays
by Keith Boykin
Avon Books, 1999



Respecting The Soul is the first daily reflections book for the black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community. The book is also targeted toward friends and family members of black lesbians and gays and anyone else who is dealing with issues of race or sexual orientation.

Respecting the Soul brings together the wit and wisdom of such diverse black heroes and sheroes as Alvin Ailey, Josephine Baker, James Baldwin, James Cleveland, Angela Davis, Peter Gomes, Lorraine Hansberry, Esse#πx Hemphill, Nona Hendryx, Langston Hughes, Carl Lewis, Little Richard, Audre Lorde, Jackie "Moms" Mabley, Nelson Mandela, Huey Newton, Me'Shell Ndege'Ocello, RuPaul, Bayard Rustin, Billy Strayhorn, Sylvester, Alice Walker, Flip Wilson, and many others, including the black and Latino drag queens who launched the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion.

Like Breathing

Like Breathing
Ric Rollins
Ishai Books, 1999

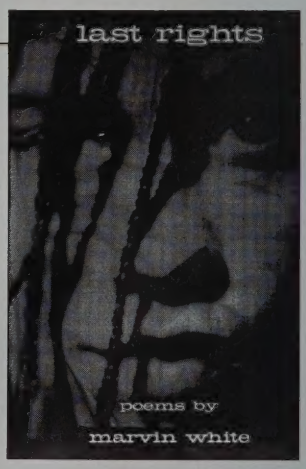
In his debut novel, Like Breathing, Ric Rollins has set the scene for the potentially rich interaction of characters. Public relations guru and all-around nice guy, Zander Eady, is on a quest for love. He thought he found it in the arty and closeted Gage Gregory, until the latter's exit to fulfill familial commitments. Parallel to their antics, we encounter the sassy wit of Rita Eady, Zander's "Big Mama," and the campy tirades of best friend Desmond Lowe. The story wouldn't be complete without the obligatory Diva, Zander's boss, Elle Paige. There's even a nod towards tragedy in Hakiem Adams, a disowned, HIV positive teen, which Zander believes he's mentoring. But Zander forgets him—and everyone else—when the possibility of real love shows up in the dashing news anchor, Jordan Jacobs.

Kudos to Rollins' depiction of black men who are unapologetic about their sexual identities. Rollins attempts to locate black gay men (BGM) within the supportive contexts of family and community while grappling with the search for love and self-fulfillment. The emotional development and portrayal of characters' psyches take a back seat to Rollins's concentration on their material possessions. The interesting subtexts around internet dating and the body image consciousness of BGM are never fully explored. However it is a worthy effort.

—review by Doug Jones

Last Rights

by Marvin K. White
Alyson Publications,1999



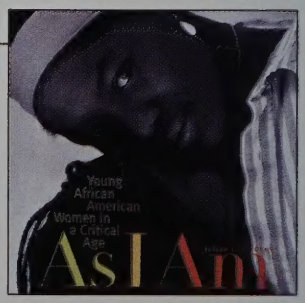
Last Rights is a powerful, passionate collection of verse which explores the essence of what it means to be black and gay. From homophobia in the African American community, to the double-barreled rage which comes from being a double minority, White's prose often leaps from the page in red-hot explosions, but it also exhibits heartrending tenderness when paying tribute to friends, lovers, parents, and community. It is an unforgettable combination.

When Marvin White writes of these things, you do not read them. You feel them. Deep inside, in places you have not visited before. You are there, on his street, in his church, singing, laughing, fighting, grieving.

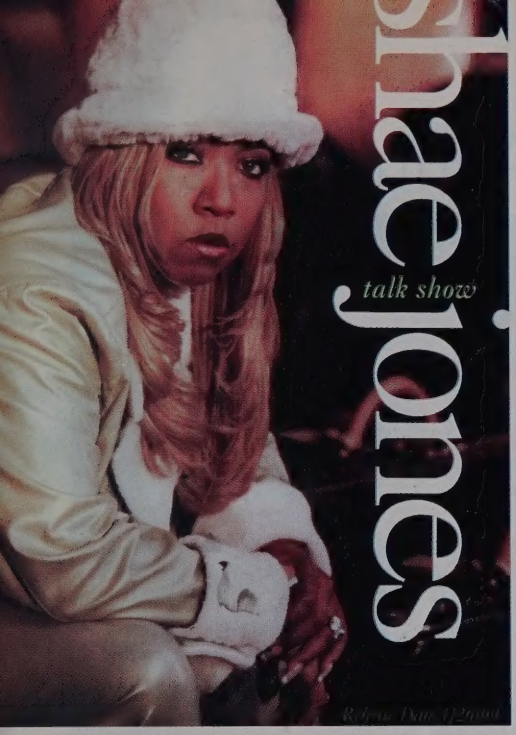
> *"Can you feel it/shakes before an earthquake/can you feel it/like the itch in your palm/ when payday is near/you can feel it/like the still birdsong before an eruption/can you feel it/like the still birdsong before an eruption/can you feel it/rolling in like a spirit riding a storm. ..."* He asks this in "Until." Yes Marvin, we can.

As I Am

Young African American Women in a Critical Age
by Julian C. R. Okwu
Chronicle Books, 1999 Paperback, $22.95



Acclaimed photographer Julian Okwu introduces us to thirty-six remarkable women who, in their own way, promote the triumph of the human spirit over diversity. Calling on lessons learned from their mothers, sisters, teachers, and friends, the thirty-six women of As I Am speak candidly about what it means to be a young African American woman living in the dawn of the new millennium.



talk show

It's not everyday a star is born. In a world of cookie cutter entertainers, musical sensations are more often created than discovered. Shae Jones is one of those rare discoveries. She is also a natural woman, one who speaks her mind—loud and clear on her debut disc Talk Show, the first release on M3, r & b singer Montell Jordan's record label, distributed by Universal Records. "I'm blunt, bottom-line and straightforward," cautions Shae, who song by song unleashes razor-sharp observations and potent vocals.

Talk Show travels through the in-your-face exploits of a '90s woman. With interludes that push the album's plot forward, the 14-track collection explores sex, love, and the drama associated with both. "My project is about women voicing their opinions. It's a wake-up call for men." Shae co-wrote three cuts on the album, with a majority of the writing and production handled by the platinum-selling Montell Jordan and his M3 crew (Shep Crawford, Dove Daniels and Jazz "The Man").

The first single is the timely "Talk Show Shhh!"—a saucy ballad about adultery with a story torrid enough for Jerry Springer (who makes a cameo in the "Talk Show Shhh!" video), co-written and produced by Jordan. The pumped up "Talk Show Shhh! (remix)" spices up the album even more.

"Got me goin' round/When I take him down/Makes me want it bad/Ain't nothing like a bad boy," Shae sensually sings over the infectious beat of the sizzler "Bad Boy." Rapper Ja Rule, a member of the soon to be released Bad Boy recording group Murder Inc. (with DMX and Jay-Z), provides the rhyme.

"If My Man Finds Out" is a funky upbeat tale of an unfaithful but blissful romance written by Jordan and produced by Teddy Bishops, producer of Jordan's chart-topping "Let's Ride." The laid-back, bumping "Let Him Go" explores the undeniable physical attraction of an ex, while "Symptoms Of A Heartbreak" is an arresting, emotional ballad about the painful end of a relationship.

Shae's deep, powerful vocals make you feel the hurt. On the explosive "Him And You," Shae teams up with another straightforward songstress, Kelly Price. The two dynamic divas take control of the song, written by Price and produced by Jazz.

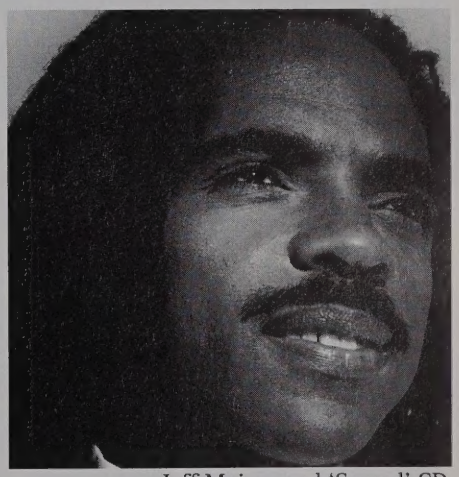
Rounding out the Talk Show set is the inspirational "Hold On," a cut co-written by Shae, Jordan, and Crawford, and featuring the Fulfillment Choir. It's Shae's "stay strong" anthem for women.

soothing the spirit

Need something to help you relieve pent-up stresses that mount from the arduous hardships of today's world? Try listening to *Sacred*, the soothing album by Jeff Majors. Crossing all religious boundaries with its universal appeal, *Sacred* eases the spirit and refreshes the soul with cheerful and joyous interpretations of eleven spiritual favorites. The album's chiming melodies soak into even the most frazzled emotional state to produce sunny mental images.

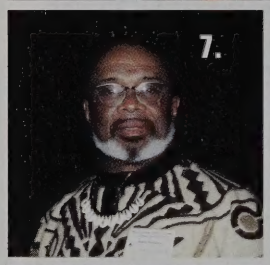
Affectionately named Hanifah—which is the name of an ancient Egyptian queen who used her beauty and wisdom to heal—Majors uses his custom-made harp to deliver rhythm-inspired melodies of spiritual love to generate a warm, back-home, family feeling.

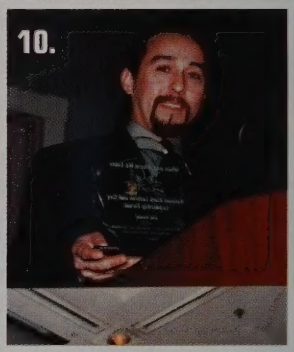
Favorites like "Blessed Assurance" and "Walk in the Light" offer hints of breezy Caribbean rhythm while maintaining the essence of the songs' traditional melody, as does "Precious Lord", which draws its strength, in part, from the emotive vocals of gospel great Genobia Jeter.


Jeff Majors and 'Sacred' CD

A quiet, reserved student of music, Majors first experienced "playing" the harp in a dream while still a teenager. After finishing high school, Majors moved to California, where he studied music under the guidance of artist Alice Coltrane, widow of jazz legend John Coltrane. He later returned to his roots to share his soothing music with an array of kinsmen—from school children to inmates in correctional facilities. Also produced by Majors, this very special CD takes listeners on a *Sacred* musical journey.

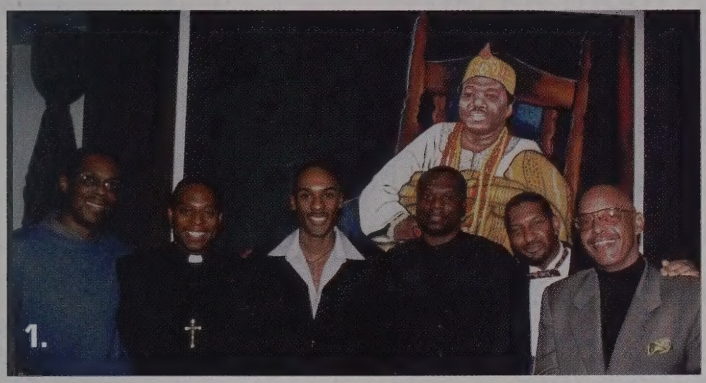
Atlanta Conference - 12th Annual NBLGLC



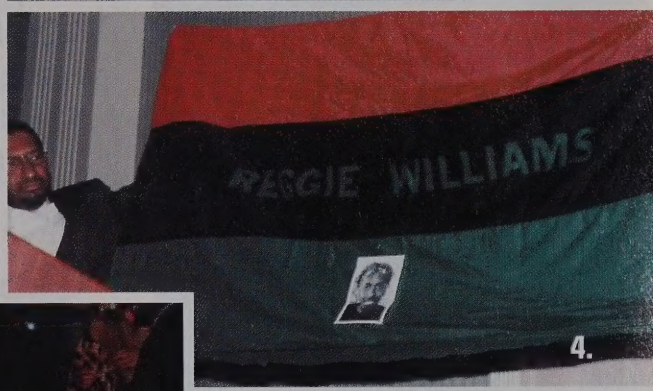


PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARY MCNAMARA

1. Grammy-award winner, Regina Belle, signs autographs after she performed cuts from her new CD *'Believe In Me'* at the National Black Lesbian and Leadership Conference in Atlanta last February. **2.** Comedienne, Karen Williams, Mistress of Ceremonies **3.** Monique Meadows, former office director of the NBLGLF and current Vice President of the Black Lesbian Support Group, Washington, D.C. accepting the **Mabel Hampton award.** **4.** [l to r] Sheila Duckworth, Barbara Tyler, and Martha Bell (Barbara's mother) **5.** [l to r] Michael Gipson, C. Smith, Jaron Bryant **6.** [l] Dwight Canter and Greg Eugene **7.** Sydney J. Thompson of Portland, OR **8.** [l to r] Martina Downey, Paula Polk, and Panda **9.** Debra Rose **10.** Martin Ornelas-Quintero, Executive Director of LLEGO accepting the **Allie Award** **11.** Author, James Earl Hardy accepting the **James Baldwin Award** **12.** Keiron Williams, of the Morehouse College Gay Student Alliance, accepting the **Joan Fountain Award.** **13.** [l to r] Karen Williams, Dr. Kofi Adoma - Violinist and activist of Detroit, MI., Dr. Marjorie Hill - Commissioner of New York City Workers Compensation Board.

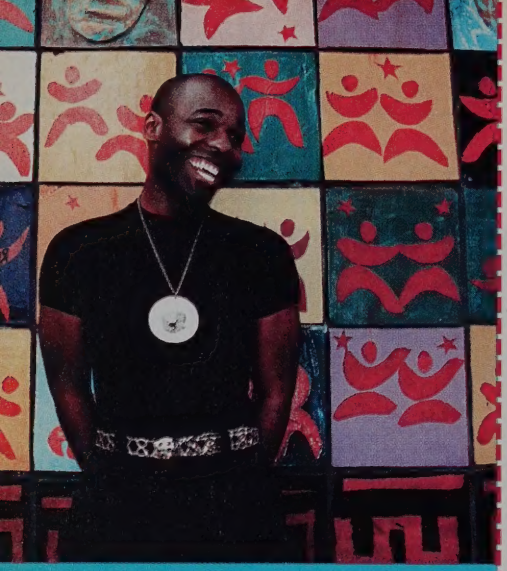


1.2. & 3 BY NEIL COLLINS



4 & 5 BY MARY MCNAMARA

1. Gay Men Of African Descent, GMAD honor Outstanding Men at the Conservatory of Black Theater in New York City. Honorees include [l to r] GMAD staff member Ray Williams, Rev. Zachary Jones - Pastor of Unity Fellowship Church of Brooklyn, NY, Keith Boykin - author of Respecting the Soul: Daily Reflections of Black Lesbians and Gays, Cleo Manago - Executive Director of AMASSI Center of Inglewood, CA, Activist George Bellinger of New York, and New York City Councilman Phil Reed. **2.** GMAD Board of Director, [top row, l to r] Kenneth Tolbert, Keith Amperado, Dariel Jones, Russell Baptiste, David Walker, Edward Thomas, William Richardson, Ivery Thomas, [bottom row] GMAD Executive Director Kevin McGruder, staff member Donald Powell, Board members Reginald Sanford, Michaels Saunders and Terrich Marable. **3.** The Honorable Phil Reed, New York City councilman, the Keynote speaker. **4.** Activist George Bellinger unveils a tribute to the late Reggie Williams, at the 12th National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Conference in Atlanta. Williams, a Black Gay and AIDS activist died last Feb. **5.** [l to r] Monique Meadows, M'Bwende Anderson, and Charlotte Young at NBLGLC.



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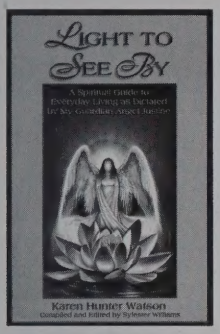

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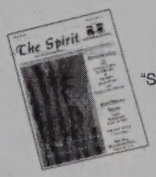

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BY REGINA M. KNOTTS

OUT at the Beauty Shop

The beauty shop, like the black church, is a staple in our community for sisterly discourse. It's supposed to be a safe place where sistahs can discuss their lives openly knowing that their feelings will be heard and acknowledged. But what happens to that safety for lesbian, bisexual, or transgender sistahs when the context of the beauty shop is completely heterosexual? It becomes a land mine-filled with difficult choices about how to be...what to say...and what to hide in a place that's supposed to be free of hidden explosions. Despite the comfort I felt in this sisterspace, I knew I'd eventually step on one of those damn mines. I remember the explosion: "So Regina, do you go out much?" my stylist asked.

For months I've waited for "the question" to be asked-one whose answer would reveal aspects of me that would change my relationship with my stylist forever. I am afraid, and I'm sitting here wondering why. I don't just fear rejection from this individual sistah. I also fear permanent ejection from a nurturing ground within the black community. But if I stay in the closet, I'll automatically cut off my soul from its regenerative energy, right? You have two choices, Regina, come out and risk external rejection, or stay in the closet and let your spirit suffocate. I chose the latter: "Oh, I'm too busy," I answered, hoping she would be satisfied with my deflection. She left it alone and went on to another topic while I went back to hiding my soul. I simply could not overcome my fear of being permanently exiled from the black community.

Writing this piece has certainly helped me face this deep fear and to recognize the need to reflect and pray about it. "Lord, my soul feels cut off from the love that exists in others. I'm so eager to connect with my people and to the love within me. Which path should I take? What choice should I make?" My answer came later that day through a sistahfriend who wrote: Our connection is our quest for touching our divinity within our humanity-and to seek the Light in those we encounter. Be open, be honest, and let your Light shine. Those who can't stand the Light shall remain in the dark no matter what you do.

As I stare at her words, recognition sets in and tears flow from my soul. I have a new weapon to battle my fears. For that, I will be eternally grateful.

By the time you read this, I will have come out to those I suspect are waiting for me to come into my own Light and share. For those of you, like me, whose greatest fear is being cut off from the energy of the black community, focus on your Divine Light. Do that and the right choice will be there for all to see.

Thanks Sweet Lord the message has been received.

I FEAR PERMANENT EJECTION FROM A NURTURING GROUND WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY. BUT IF I STAY IN THE CLOSET, I'LL AUTOMATICALLY CUT OFF MY SOUL FROM ITS REGENERATIVE ENERGY, RIGHT?

Regina M. Knotts, a native of Newark, Delaware, currently manages an interviewing site for a marketing research firm. She is an aspiring sociologist who is preparing for a return to graduate school.

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